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CONTENTS

THE RISE OF EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Chris L. De Wet
Editor

Elizabeth Clark, in a recent article written in the *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (2008:8–41), point to the phenomenon of the decline of Patristics as a field in theology. She also refers to Charles Kannengiesser's presidential address to the North American Patristics Society entitled 'Bye, Bye Patristics,' in which he states that there is a new generation of scholars emerging in the field of 'early Christian studies,' who are giving more attention to the social dimension of the field than the previous generation. *Acta Patristica et Byzantina*, as an accredited academic journal, represents an awareness of this shift in the discipline. The point of a scholarly journal is not merely to publish articles from researchers, but a journal, in the words of my colleague Gerhard van den Heever, gives shape to a discipline and needs to guide and mediate scholarly discourse in a given field.

These changes in the scholarly 'climate' of early Christian studies especially rose with the development of 'late ancient studies' as a field, with scholars like Peter Brown and Averil Cameron providing a benchmark for Kannengiesser's new generation. Developments in the disciplines of late ancient studies and early Christian studies are so closely related that they are nearly synonymous as fields of enquiry. Early Christian studies cannot be separated from the cultural-historical context of late antiquity. It therefore stands to reason that one cannot merely read ancient texts as non-transparent bastions of authority, which was (and still is in many cases) characteristic of traditional studies in New Testament and Patristics in Europe and North America after World War II. The representation of reality in the texts, although they have been influential, is still a representation and in essence, a product of a particular rhetoric in a specific space and time. Sensitivity to these representations and constructs of reality is needed, since they often need to be deconstructed, which lies at the heart of academic enquiry. The reconstruction and redescription of textual data needs to be culturally sensitive and socially responsible and always tolerant and open to discourse and critique. It would be highly irresponsible and indicative of an anti-academic to assume that any picture we have of ancient practices and beliefs are 'facts' – as if, in Hayden White's words,

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> 'the historical milieu' – has a concreteness and an accessibility that the work [that is, the *text*] can never have, as if it were easier to perceive the reality of a past world put together from a thousand historical documents than it is to probe the depths of a single literary work that is present to the critic studying it. But the presumed concreteness and accessibility of historical milieux, these contexts of the texts that literary scholars study, are themselves the products of the fictive capability of the historians who have studied those contexts (in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (*1978:79)).

This can almost be considered the manifesto of *Acta Patristica et Byzantina*. It aims to be sensitive to texts as representations of reality and artefacts communicating a particular rhetoric of power that needs to be deconstructed – and reconstructed.

As the new editor, it is a privilege to continue the good work done by the previous editor, Prof. Hennie Stander, and the editorial board, along with all past contributors, and to thank them for the contributions of the journal to scholarship over the past 20 years. The new residence of the journal, the Department of New Testament and Early Christian Studies at UNISA is, in my opinion, the perfect 'milieu' for the journal in this new era of early Christian studies. I also wish to thank the new publisher, UNISA Press, for their willingness to publish the journal.

THE NEW PERSPECTIVE(S) ON PAUL AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR ETHICS AND MISSION

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ABSTRACT

In this article the *New Perspectives*[1] *on Paul* and its implication for Pauline ethics will be discussed as well as the relationship it has to the understanding of the missionary dynamics in Paul. The article begins with the history of the development of the *New Perspectives on Paul* and continues by exploring James Dunn's contribution to the understanding of the controversy in the Letter to the Galatians regarding works of the law (ἔργων νόμου). The implications of Dunn's thesis are subsequently accounted for and brought in relation with mission and ethics in the early church. Thereafter, the contribution of N. T. Wright is discussed with special reference to his understanding of the righteousness of God and the righteousness of those who come to faith in Christ.

1 Introduction

In his book "Reinventing Paul", Gagner (2000) investigates Paul and his relationship to Judaism against the background of the *New Perspectives on Paul*. Gagner rightly refers to the fact that after the devastation of World War II, there has been a growing outreach to Judaism by Christian leaders and scholarship.[2] This was unfortunately not the case in the past, and especially during the all important *Aufklärung.* The predominant view of Judaism as constructed by the (Reformed) Western church was one of extreme legalism. Leading exponents of this view were F. Weber, E. Schürer, W. Bousset and P. Billerbeck. In Weber's influential book *System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie,* he developed the thesis that the Jewish religion of Paul's day was nothing less than a legalistic religion in which the people of God earned their righteousness by means of good works (works-righteousness). Weber influenced other scholars like W. Bousset who again influenced the German scholar R. Bultmann who uncritically took over the point of view of Weber. Consequently, the view that Judaism was a legalistic works-

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righteousness religious system, antithetical to Christianity and its faith-righteousness was therefore uncritically excepted. In most commentaries and theologies of the time, this view was the predominant one.

Against the background of the predominant legalistic view of Judaism, underlying discourses started to develop. A decade before the outbreak of World War II (1927–1930), G. F. Moore (see Dunn 2008:5–6 n. 20) published his *Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian era: The age of the Tannaim* in which he painted a new picture of Judaism that was less legalistic. Others, like the Jewish theologian C. G. Montefiore (1915) also criticised the misrepresented view of Weber and appealed in favour of the diversity of literature within rabbinic literature itself. According to Montefiore, Judaism viewed the law as a gift from God and in no way interpreted it in a legalistic works-righteousness way.

Unfortunately, the work of Moore and Montefiore was not taken seriously by New Testament scholarship. The predominant view of Judaism as a cold legalistic merit-earning religious system prevailed. This view not only predominated within New Testament scholarship, but also fueled someone like Hitler and his anti-semitic program which culminated in one of the world's most devastating events.

Moore and Montefiore were not the only ones who proposed an alternative view on Judaism. As early as 1963, the Lutheran Bishop K. Stendahl (1963:199–215) published his "Paul and the introspective conscience of the West". According to Stendahl, Paul remained a Jew until the end of his life and did not view himself as a Christian, that is, part of some religion other than Judaism. The implication is that Paul's conversion must be understood not as a conversion *from* Judaism but a conversion *within* Judaism. Consequently, Paul saw his own calling as a calling by God to be an apostle, sent by God to the Gentiles, within the (original) covenant plan of God. Thus Luther's interpretation of Paul, as being converted *from* Judaism *into* a new religion presents a misunderstanding of Paul. According to Stendahl (1963:199–215), Paul was closer to Judaism than has previously been recognised. Stendahl's perspective differs fundamentally from scholars like Weber (1880)[3] who maintained the view that Judaism was essentially a religion of legalism.

More than a decade after Stendahl's work, Sanders (1977) published his seminal work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Aware of the fact that the previous work done by scholars like Moore had little impact on the academic community, Sanders was determined that his own polemical protest would be unmistakable (Dunn 2008:6 n. 20). Sanders conducted a thorough study of Jewish literature (see 1 QS 11.11–15; Psm 103:10; Dan 9:16–18, etc) and came to the convincing finding that the traditional understanding of Judaism as a religion that attempted to earn their right standing before God, was a misrepresentation of Judaism altogether. He argued that Judaism was not obsessed with works-righteousness and the effort of man to win the favour of God to earn righteousness. Judaism's theology of salvation recognises first of all the initiative of a loving God who made a covenant with his people. Members of the covenant were

already accepted by God and therefore they did not need to do good works to earn that favour. Obedience to the law was seen as the way in which the covenant members stayed within the covenant and maintained their membership. The works of the law are thus not to be seen as a means to *get into* the covenant but a means to *stay in* the covenant Sanders (1977:420, 543; cf. also 75, 236, 420, 544). To explain the latter, Sanders used the term "covenantal nomism" (*Bundesnomismus*) which represented the inter-relationship between divine initiative (covenant) and the response of those who are within that relationship (nomism) (Dunn 2008:6–7). Consequently, Sanders argued that the traditional Lutheran understanding of Paul and his view of Judaism were nothing less than erroneous. He illustrated that scholars like Billerbeck employed only certain elements of Judaism in their thesis to illustrate the legalism of Judaism, but conveniently did not consider the evidence that pointed in the opposite direction. Towards the end of his book, Sanders discusses the implication of his new understanding of Second Temple Judaism and its implication for the understanding of Paul.[4] Sanders furthermore objected to the caricature of Judaism that was constructed by Christian scholarship, something that has been picked up by many, like J. Parkes (1936:120), who Sanders (1977:6) quotes as saying that: "...if Paul was really attacking 'Rabbinic Judaism', then much of his argument is irrelevant, his abuse unmerited, and his conception of that which he was attacking inaccurate".

Other New Testament scholars quickly reacted on the thesis of Sanders. In his well-known T. W. Manson Memorial Lecture (1982),[5] James Dunn coined the phrase "The New Perspective on Paul". The so-called *New Perspective on Paul* represents a considerable shift in the traditional Reformed or Lutheran interpretation of Paul that has dominated theological thinking for the last four centuries. The latter interpretation is in this context referred to as the so-called *Old (Lutheran) Perspective on Paul*. In his *New Perspective on Paul*, Dunn integrated and further developed the thesis of Sanders into his new understanding of Paul and his relationship to Israel and the law. Dunn focused on Paul's letter to the Galatians and discussed the key term ergwn nomou (works of the law), which occurs in Gal 2:16. His main argument, until this day, is that the ergwn nomou in this context refers to the circumcision which the false teachers compelled the believers to observe (Gal 2:3–4) and the food laws with the resulting table fellowship rules that would be maintained (Gal 2:14). The works of the law against which Paul is speaking here, refer in other words not to the law or good works as such, but to those works that served as *boundary markers to mark off and separate Israel from the nations*.[6] Dunn saw parallels in other texts in which this perspective is explicitly present, for instance, Aristeas 139–142: "In his wisdom the legislator [i.e. Moses]... surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the other peoples in any matter, being thus kept pure in body and soul...to prevent our being perverted by contact...."[7] Dunn's study of Romans strengthened his perspective and led him further in the same direction. In Romans 3:27–30 the boasting on the grounds of the law are to be seen as works of the law that function in a way that reinforces

Israel's exclusive claim on God in opposition to those who do not do the works of the law. Also in Romans 9:30–10:4, the focus on the works of the law and the relation to righteousness is to be understood as works of the law that clearly has the Jews in question believing that the latter set them apart from other nations. The law thus puts them in a superior position, over and against those who do not do the works of the law, or the specific boundary markers. For Paul, this view of the law and righteousness stood in antithesis to his own understanding of the universal dimension of faith and the inclusive character of the gospel he was called to preach. It was exactly this view that was radically transformed in his Damascus conversion (see Acts 9) when he was called by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles – those who were excluded from the grace of God. Paul actively worked against the presupposition of the zealous Jews of his time who held the view that it is their duty to maintain Israel's set-apartness to God (cf. Levi, Phineas, Elijah, the Maccabees) and who saw themselves as "Jews by nature" and not "Gentile sinners" (Gal 2:15) – which represented the typical Jewish view of Gentiles. In 1994, Dunn's view which he developed more than a decade before was strengthened by the publication of the sectarian Qumran text, 4 QMMT in which the term "works of the law" explicitly appears and is linked to separation of the Qumran group from outsiders. Paul's problem with the Jewish believers in Galatians was that they treated the Gentiles with the "old condemning perspective" of Judaism that excluded the latter from fellowship with God and his people expressed amongst other things in their approach to table fellowship and circumcision (Dunn 2008:12–13). When Paul in Galatians speaks against the works of the law that do not have the ability to make one righteous, he is thus referring not to good works in general, but to those "boundary marker works" that separate Jews from Gentiles. Paul in other words appealed against those Jews in Antioch who insisted that Gentiles should "*Judaize*" (cf. Gal 2:14), in addition to faith, in order to become part of the community of faith (cf. Gal 2:16) and that these boundary markers are indispensable to salvation. Over and against this perspective Paul sees the gospel as having a universal scope (Rom 1:17), meant for all those who believe, signifying Gentile as well as Jew. Accordingly, Paul's teaching on justification focuses on the necessity to overcome the zealous barrier which the law was seen to interpose between Gentile and Jew (Dunn 2008:16–17).

2 The Implication for Mission and Ethics

Dunn's *New Perspective on Paul* has implications for the understanding of the dynamic relationship between mission and ethics in Paul. The term "works of the law" had an ethical dimension to it in the sense that it related to questions on identity, ethics and ethos (see Van der Watt 2006:v–ix). The Jews held extremely inclusive beliefs with regard to whom they were to socialise and interact with, that were amongst other things reflected in their dietary regulations and food laws. These food laws served as important ritual markers of Jewish identity:

> The limits of acceptable table fellowship between a Jew and a Gentile would be determined by two factors: (1) the Deuteronomic laws in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:3–21, and (2) the various *halakoth* (halāk̲ôt̲, 'ways') of the oral tradition. For the most part these laws and traditions primarily concerned the production and consumption of food and the appropriate environment in which consumption took place. J. Neusner has stressed that during the NT era one primary mark of Pharisaic commitment was the observance of the laws of ritual purity outside of the Temple, where everyone kept them. Eating one's secular, that is, unconsecrated food in a state of ritual purity, as if one were a Temple priest in the cult, was one of the two significations of party membership. Moreover, the agricultural laws, just like the purity rules, in the end affected table-fellowship, namely what one may eat (Neusner 1984:57). After a detailed examination of rabbinical traditions concerning the Pharisees, involving 341 case rulings, Neusner concludes that 'no fewer than 229 directly or indirectly pertain to table-fellowship, approximately 67% of the whole' (Neusner 1973: 86). In this respect the Pharisees can be called an 'Eating Club' (Neusner 1982). (Hawthorne, Martin & Reid 1993:306)

In the Galatian controversy (see Dunn 1983), the opposing Jewish Christian false teachers insisted that the Gentile converts be subjected to certain "works of the law" on a behavioural level (ethics and ethos), namely to keep certain typical Jewish-cultural table fellowship rules, religious days and feasts, and have themselves circumcised. These behavioural categories are imbedded within a particular understanding of Jewish-particularistic socio-religious and cultural identity, as Dunn (1983:2007) pointed out. The opponents imposed a certain identity on the community of faith in Galatia who already formed a sociological group with its own self- understanding and way of life (manner of sociological interaction based on a new symbolic universe). The imposing of new behavioural categories by the opponents based on a particular sense of Jewish identity could not be possible without the deconstruction of power structures. The opponents therefore deconstructed the authority of Paul as apostle by claiming that they represented those who were apostles before Paul. In this way the status of Paul as apostle and his authority was put into question (see Gal 1:6–10; 4:17, 21–31; 5:10; 6:11–18). The implication and practical outworking of the new/different gospel of the false teachers would have resulted in the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others, due to the character of the ἔργων νόμου as (socio-religious and cultural) boundary markers. The new teaching re-established elements of the law which inherently created social distinctions between Jews and Gentiles (circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, food laws). This would have direct implications with regard to the dynamics of the missionary process and the scope and intention of the gospel as a liberating message to *all who believed*, *and not only those who become like Jews*. On a historical level, it seems that it was at the apostle meeting in Jerusalem in 48/49 A.D. that the issue of gentile converts and the works of the law was resolved to some degree at least. At this conference, the resolution of the issue whether Gentiles should *Judaize*, and the subsequent decision that Jewish identity markers would not be imposed on Gentiles, resulted in the acknowledgement of Paul's missionary calling to the Gentiles (Gal 2:9; Acts 15). In other words, the solution to the question about the particularistic Jewish practices stood in a direct relationship

to the acknowledgement of the universal missionary commission of Paul. Argued from the opposite direction, the maintenance/imposing of the pre-Jerusalem council point of view would implicitly entail a rejection of Paul's universal missionary calling – or would at least have an effect on it.

The false teachers' proposed ethos (circumcision and table fellowship rules, etc.) and its relation to identity inevitably would have resulted in the creation of new boundaries between the community of faith and its relationship to the outside world. In Gal 6:10 Paul encourages the community of faith to especially show love towards each other, but nonetheless also do good to those outside of the community of faith (cf. ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς πάντας). The false teachers who compelled the believers to adhere to "works of the law" (food laws, etc) would have resulted in the *Abgrenzung* of the faith community (who adhered to the ἔργων νόμου as boundary markers) from those outside of it which would have had direct implications for Paul's theology of mission. The dimension of outreach would have been limited to those with whom one could share table fellowship, and only those who shared the same Jewish particularistic works of the law or boundary markers would have become part of the community of faith. In other words, not faith, but specific Jewish cultural practices (ethos) would have determined who could get in, and who had to stay outside.

This went against the grain of Paul's missional theology and its inclusive universalistic approach. For Paul, the gospel, from the perspective of a high Christology (Jesus is Lord over all), transcended particularistic Jewish cultural-religious badges. In other words, according to Paul, Gentiles did not need to become Jews in order to become Christians.

Paul soon reacted to the false teachings amongst his community of faith and in his correspondence to the Galatian community he re-established his status as apostle (Gal 2:1ff.). He also emphasised the fact that the message he preached was not received by men, but by Jesus Christ himself through the process of divine revelation (Gal 1:11). In this way Paul deconstructed the message and authority of the false teachers, by using an example in which Peter (Gal 2:11–14), one of the pillars of the church (Gal 2:9 – στῦλοι), is presented as an inconsistent moral agent who regresses into old excluding behavioural categories that by implication strengthened the boundary lines between believing Jews and believing Gentiles. In this way Peter is presented as turning his back on those with whom he had been eating moments earlier (Gal 2:12a – μετά τῶν ἐθνῶν συνήσθιεν) and keeping himself separate (Gal 2:12b – ὑπέστελλεν καὶ ἀφώριζεν ἑαυτὸν) from them. Over and against this picture, Paul is presented as the one who has been consistent from the beginning – the one that should be trusted as the original bringer of the true gospel of reconciliation that represents the message and intent of Jesus (and God) himself. The message of reconciliation becomes apparent exactly within the context where the boundary markers, like that of the exclusivist food laws, are deconstructed. Hawthorne, Martin & Reid (1993:306) are correct when they argue that meals within the context of Christian house gatherings can be seen as nothing less than an overt manifestation of

reconciliation between the Jews and Gentiles in Christ. Earlier Meeks (1983:97) argued that by deconstructing and abandoning the traditional Jewish regulations governing food laws and by social interaction with outsiders the "Pauline Christians gave up one of the most effective ways by which the Jewish community had maintained its separate identity in the pagan society" (Meeks 1983:97). According to Hawthorne, Martin and Reid (1993:306) "the house church was the venue for the cultural disestablishment which was necessary for the founding of the church in a Jewish-Gentile milieu. While the Gentiles were admonished to respect Jewish sensibilities, the meals served in these house churches confirmed the central message of the gospel in the Christian community, the message of reconciliation" (on reconciliation in Paul [Versöhnen], see also Becker 1989:432–437). Once the particularistic, exclusivist ethnic works of the law are disestablished, there has to be a new category for inclusion and exclusion – a new core for a new theology. In Galatians Paul makes a strong case for the fact that faith (in Christ Jesus the Lord), and not particularistic Jewish cultural works of the law, will serve as the means of entrance into the community of faith and those who are righteous before God (Gal 2:15–16).

3 Wright-sising Dunn on the Core of Paul's Theology?

This brings us to the question of the centre of Paul's theology. Traditional protestant interpretation views Paul's teaching on righteousness or justification by faith as the centre of his theology. In response it could be asked whether Paul in his missionary preaching to the Gentiles focused his missionary message on justification by faith. N. T. Wright (1997:45, 88, 113, 114, 151 [see also Wright 2009]) is of the opinion that this was not the case at all. He is of the opinion that the core of Paul's missionary preaching (*contra* Dunn) revolved around the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Messiah – the One who fulfilled Israel's expectations. Thus, according to Wright, Romans 1:3–4 (περί τοῦ υἱου αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ κατά σάρκα, 4 τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατά πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν,᾽Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν) is the core of his gospel and not Romans 1:16–17 (Οὐ γάρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γάρ θεοῦ ἐστιν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντί τῷ πιστεύοντι,᾽Ιουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καί ῞Ελληνι. 17 δικαιοσύνη γάρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθώς γέγραπται· ὁ δέ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται). The core message is thus the proclamation of the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord, and not Caesar. The dimension of justification does not form the centre of Paul's preaching but is simply a result of faith in Christ's Lordship. Faith is the means by which a person becomes part of the new family of God (cf. Gal 3:26 – Πάντες γάρ υἱοί θεοῦ ἐστε διά τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ᾽Ιησοῦ). Justification follows faith and the resulting transformation from being an outsider (slave – δοῦλος) to being an insider (heir – κληρονόμος) (cf. Gal 4:7 – ὥστε οὐκέτι εἶ δοῦλος ἀλλά υἱος εἶ δέ υἱος καί κληρονόμος διά θεοῦ). In other words,

according to Wright, the preaching of the gospel and the coming to faith of believers is the centre of Paul's preaching. There where people are freed from the grip of sin and death (cf. Gal 3:22), there the core of the gospel is seen in action. It is also interesting to note that this concept is also expressed in Galatians 3:22 where Paul discusses the difference between those who are slaves and those who are sons (children) of God (Gal 3:21–4:7): The problem with the world is that all people are caught up in the grip of sin (ἀλλά συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφὴ τά πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν), but that which has been promised has been given *to those who believe in Jesus Christ* (ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν). Here again, there is no way out of the grip of sin, and no access to the promises except through faith. We could thus agree with Wright that faith in the gospel (namely that Jesus is Lord) is the core message and pivotal point in Paul: For Wright, God's covenant faithfulness (righteousness) was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus who was nothing less than the expected Messiah (cf. Rom 1:4). Thus, the heart of Paul's theology is his *fundamental covenant theology* (cf. Rom 6) (Wright 2003:3). By saying that Jesus is Lord and Messiah, is in other words a way of saying, among other things, "Israel's history has come to its climax" and the prophecies of Isaiah (cf. Isa 40, 52) have been fulfilled (Rom 1:4).

In the time of Paul, the word "gospel" designated the message that Caesar was Lord. The gospel message of Paul boldly claimed that Jesus Christ, and not Caesar is Lord, and that he should be worshipped (cf. Phil 2:5–11). This was in direct opposition to the emperor cult and the power structures of the day. For Wright, the latter lies at the heart of his so called "fresh perspectives on Paul" – namely the "discovery of a subversive political dimension not as an add-on to Paul's theology but as part of the inner meaning of 'gospel', 'righteousness', and so on" (Wright 2003:3).

This of course touched on Paul's missionary dimension. When Paul as missionary proclaimed the gospel, he naturally started by proclaiming who Jesus was, and explained the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. For Paul, the proclamation of the gospel was closely related to the working of the Spirit. The moment some of those who hear and believe the message come to faith, then Paul admits that it was a direct result not of his oratory brilliance but a result of the Spirit, for "[n]o person can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit". Where the gospel is thus preached and believed, there the Spirit is at work. Thus, the proclamation of the gospel (the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Messiah and Lord) functions as the means of grace and the vehicle of the Spirit (Wright 2003:5). Furthermore, the proclamation of the gospel is a royal summons to submission, to obedience, to allegiance; and the form that this submission and obedient allegiance takes is nothing less than faith. Paul's expression "the obedience of faith" is in other words essentially performative – it compels the believer not only towards a particular reorientation in the context of a new family/social group but also towards a new way of life. Faith changes the believer's existential reality and is closely related to a new lifestyle (ethics).

4 Righteousness in Paul – Subjective or Objective Genitive?

Here it is necessary to discuss the concept of righteousness (*dikaiosune theou*) and the role it played in Paul's theology. Scholars agree that almost in all instances where Paul discusses justification, he does so in the context of a critique of Judaism and with regard to the issue of the relationship between Jew and Gentile and the coming together of these two groups in Christ. Wright (2003:6) is still, after many years, of the opinion that when Paul uses this phrase it denotes not the status which God's people have from him or in his presence, but the *righteousness of God himself*. The righteousness of God is linked to the covenant God made with Israel and the righteousness of God refers to God's faithfulness and therefore could be seen as a form of justice (*covenant-justice* according to Wright). Because of God's faithfulness, he saves Israel and sends Jesus Messiah as Lord who fulfils the expectations of the covenant. Thus, the proclamation of the gospel is another way of saying God is righteous after all – he stayed true to the covenant and saved Israel. The other side of God's righteousness is the necessary judgement on those who did not stay true to the covenant – and therefore the righteousness of God inevitably also entails the *judgement of people at the end of time* (Rom 2:16 – ἐν ἡμέρα ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τά κρυπτά τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατά τὸ εὐαγγέλιον μου διά Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ), which according to Paul would also be against the background of the works of men during their earthly life (cf. Rom 2:13 – οὐ γάρ οἱ ἀκροαταί νόμου δίκαιοι παρά (τῷ) θεῷ, ἀλλ' οἱ ποιηταί νόμου δικαιωθήσονται [cf. also 1 Cor 5:10 – τοὺς γάρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα κομίσηται ἕκαστος τά διά τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ἃ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθόν εἴτε φαῦλον]). It is in other words clear that for Paul, the law, or the doing of good works will be taken into consideration at the final judgement. Thus Paul is not against the doing of good works per se (see Bachmann 2008:29). In fact, it is *Selbsverständlicher-weise* seen as linked to faith and seen as a consequent outworking of faith (Gal 5:22ff.). Faith in Christ thus has direct ethical implications. The question at the end of time would thus be – who would be found as those who belong to God's covenant people? This question is dealt with in Rom 9–11. Wright (2003:6) makes a strong argument that the covenant with Israel was from the beginning (cf. Gen 12:3; Isa 40–55) always designed to be God's means of saving and blessing the entire cosmos (see especially Gen 12:3). Therefore, the fulfilment of the covenant inherently had to have an inclusive universal dimension – not only Israel was in scope but all nations, Gentiles and Barbarians alike.

In one of the pre-graduate classes on this subject, one of my students, after hearing about Wright's perspective outlined above, asked whether this means that the *Old Perspective on Paul* is like the television show "Survivor". He then went on to explain that it seems to him that some in the old perspective thinking saw Christian faith as a form of immunity – namely that when the tribal council takes place, they will not be voted out because they have this special necklace that says they are believers. Now he

understands that it is not true that a believer by implication has immunity just because he/she believes, but that works are still very important. If you do not have works, you will be judged. The only question he now faced was whether righteousness functions like someone's facebook status in the sense that one day your status is active and minutes later your facebook status is terminated. This creative analogical question got down right to the point.

Wright (2003:7) deals exactly with this question when he later discusses the question of how to understand the righteous status that believers enjoy. He argues that in Philippians 3:9 Paul states that καί εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμήν δικαιοσύνην ἐπί τῇ πίστει. According to Wright (2003:7) the NIV translation of Romans 3:21–26[8] has it totally wrong. In the latter translation it becomes apparent that the *dikaiosune theou* is interpreted as "a righteousness from God" instead of God's righteousness (difference between an objective and a subjective genitive). This of course has important implications for the way we should understand the status of "righteous" that is enjoyed by God's people in Christ.

To solve this exegetical problem, Wright (2003:7–8) metaphorically turns to the forensic context of the Jewish law court:

> In the Jewish law court Paul would have known, there is no Director of Public Prosecutions; there is a judge, with a plaintiff and a defendant appearing before him. When the case has been heard, the judge finds in favour of one party and against the other. Once that has happened, the vindicated party possesses the status 'righteous' – not itself a moral statement, we note, but a statement of how things stand in terms of the now completed lawsuit. When either the plaintiff or the defendant is declared 'righteous' at the end of the case, there is no sense that in either case the judge's *own* righteousness has been passed on to them, by imputation, impartation, or any other process. What they have is a status of 'righteous' which comes *from* the judge. Let me stress, in particular, that when the judge finds in favour of one party or the other, he quite literally makes them righteous; because 'righteous' at this point is *not* a word denoting moral character, but only and precisely the status that you have when the court has found in your favour.

When the believer thus has been declared "righteous" by God or has received the status of a righteous person, it does not refer to imputation as if the believer obtains the righteousness of God or the righteousness of Christ. As believers, we become children in the new family of the righteous God. We do not possess God's righteousness in us but have simply been declared righteous by the righteous God – due to the fact that we have come into the right relationship with him.

Even a text like 2 Corinthians 5:21 that states that: τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπερ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, should not be seen to mean that believers *have* the righteousness of God. According to Wright (2003:8) it simply means that in Christ those who are called to be apostolic preachers actually embody God's own covenant faithfulness. The righteousness they embody in other words points to God's righteousness. The righteousness of believers is thus representational in character in the sense that it represents the righteousness of

God; the righteousness of believers is thus like a mirror in the sense that in it people will see God and his righteousness.

5 Will Christians Be Judged by Works After All?

If Wright's train of thought is followed, it will naturally lead to the question of works or applied and implied Christian ethics. If, as Meeks (1993:94) rightly points out, there is no distinction to be made between Jew and Gentile on the grounds of the equal standing before God, one inevitably has to ask whether or not the manifestation of God's righteousness is suddenly to be seen apart from the law. In other words, in the missionary process and reimagining and retelling of what the righteousness of God means against the background of the Christ event, the ethical dimension and relationship to the law was of crucial importance. Important questions naturally arise in this context: What will be the shape of the (new) moral life? Will Christians, who in the missionary process have become part of the new family of God, be judged according to works during the final eschatological judgment? Will they suddenly discover that their righteous status has been terminated, that they never had immunity, and that they have just been voted off from the island? Wright is straight to the point and replies with an unambiguous "yes":

> Paul, in company with mainstream second-Temple Judaism, affirms that God's final judgment will be in accordance with the entirety of a life led – in accordance, in other words, with works. He says this clearly and unambiguously in Romans 14.10–12 and 2 Corinthians 5.10. He affirms it in that terrifying passage about church-builders in 1 Corinthians 3. But the main passage in question is of course Romans 2.1–16 (Wright 2003:8).

Believers will in other words also stand in front of God's (righteous) judgement seat. This aspect of Paul's theology has been overlooked due to the traditional Reformed view on justification, contrary to the apostle Paul's own words about the matter. There are many passages that deal with Paul's view of the final judgment (cf. 2 Cor 5:10 – τοὺς γάρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα κομίσηται ἕκαστος τά διά τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ἃ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθόν εἴτε φαῦλον; Rom 14:10–12 – πάντες γάρ παραστησόμεθα τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ...ἄρα (οὖν) ἕκαστος ἡμῶν περί ἑαυτοῦ λόγον δώσει (τῷ θεῷ)).

Wright explains this point further by referring to Romans 2:1–16 where Paul argues that God is an impartial Judge (Rom 2:11 – οὐ γάρ ἐστιν προσωπολημψία παρά τῷ θεῷ) who will judge people according to good works (Rom 2:10 – δόξα δὲ καί τιμὴ καί εἰρήνη παντί τῷ ἐργαζομένῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν) or bad (Rom 2:9 – λῖψις καί στενοχωρία ἐπί πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου τοῦ κατεργαζομένου τὸ κακόν).

It is however important to note that we do not here have to do with the moralistic view of works-righteousness! These works are the fruit (cf. Gal 5:22) of those who let their lives be guided by the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 18) who equips the believers (Gal 3:5). These works in reality illustrate that the believer is really in Christ and the resulting

works are produced by the indwelling of the Spirit. It is thus almost an automatic result of a life in Christ (Gal 3:26). The Spirit is able to do what the law could not, namely to give life (Rom 8:1–17 in relation to 2:1–16; Gal 5:22) – and that within the context of life shaped by a high moral consciousness. Wright (2003:9) points to the fact that Paul is clear "that the things he does in the present, by moral and physical effort, will count to his credit on the last day, precisely because they are the effective signs that the Spirit of the living Christ has been at work in him" (see also 1 Thess 3:19f.; cf. Phil 2:16; 1 Cor 15:10; Col 1:29). Therefore, only at the end judgment will we be declared righteous, (if our works proved that we were in Christ [Rom 2:7]) and only then will we be justified (Rom 2:13). This brings Wright (2003:9) to the important statement that justification is the "*anticipation in the present* of the justification which will occur in the future, and gains its meaning from that anticipation".

6 On Our Way to Salvation – Living Our Calling

Wright (2003:10) argues convincingly that in traditional old perspective protestant thinking the terms conversion and justification have often been interpreted as coterminous. This particular perspective distorts the view Paul had on the matter and certainly maintains traditional old perspective interpretation. The interesting fact Wright points to is that Paul did not see it this way. The word(s) Paul uses when he refers to that moment when the gospel is heard and people come to faith, is not "conversion" or "justification" but "calling" (cf. 1 Cor 1:26; 7:20; Phil 3:14; especially Rom 11:29). Wright (2003:10) postulates: "For Paul, the word 'call' denoted not merely a vocation to a particular task but also, more fundamentally, the effective call of the gospel, applied by the Spirit to the individual heart and life and resulting in a turning away from idolatry and sin and a lifelong turning to God in Christ in believing allegiance." It is exactly at this point where Wright's fresh perspective differs from the old protestant perspective. Justification follows the calling – it happens subsequent to the calling, and functions as a declaration. The word "justify" should in other words not be used to denote "conversion" as the protestant interpretation sees it; for Wright (2003:11) "justification is something that *follows on from* the 'call' through which a sinner is summoned to turn from idols and serve the living God, to turn from sin and follow Christ, to turn from death and believe in the God who raised Jesus from the dead". The moment of calling is the *start of a process* in which He (God) that started it all will bring it to completion (Phil 1:6 – πεποιθώς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). It is further interesting to note that in Phil 1:6, that which God started in the believer (ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν) is also referred to as being good works (ἔργον ἀγαθὸν).

7 If Justification Is Not Conversion – What Is It?

How is justification to be understood if it is not to be equated with conversion? This could be explained best by Wright's forensic metaphor of the judge that declares someone righteous, discussed above. Justification is thus to be understood as a declarative word – when the judge declares that something is (already) the case. When God declares someone as "justified" he declares that someone is in the right, and that this person is now part of the (universal: Jew/Gentile) covenant family and no longer outside of it. This all happens against the background of God's covenant (and Paul's underlying covenantal theology). Here God's declaration of forgiveness of sins and declaration of covenant membership is one and the same thing: those who were sinners (Jews and Gentiles) are now part of the newly created covenant family of God (Rom 3:21–31) where all people are equal before God. Consequently, Wright may be right when he proposes that this is how the controversy in Gal 2:11–22 should be understood. Perhaps it had less to do with "how" one becomes a Christian but more to do with "who" should be part of this new covenant family and "why" Jewish-particularistic ethnic works of the law are not those that will constitute the required works that will bring a person into the covenant relationship. Wright (2003:13–14) argues his point convincingly:

> And we now discover that this declaration, this vindication, occurs twice. It occurs in the future, as we have seen, on the basis of the entire life a person has led in the power of the Spirit – that is, it occurs on the basis of 'works' in Paul's redefined sense. And, near the heart of Paul's theology, it occurs in the present as an anticipation of that future verdict, when someone, responding in believing obedience to the 'call' of the gospel, believes that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. This is the point about justification by faith – to revert to the familiar terminology: it is the anticipation in the present of the verdict which will be reaffirmed in the future. Justification is not 'how someone becomes a Christian'. It is God's declaration about the person who has just become a Christian. And, just as the final declaration will consist, not of words so much as of an event, namely, the resurrection of the person concerned into a glorious body like that of the risen Jesus, so the present declaration consists, not so much of words, though words there may be, but of an event, the event in which one dies with the Messiah and rises to new life with him, anticipating that final resurrection.

The important thing to realise is that justification in Paul is not to be seen as *how* someone *could get into* God's covenant people, but *God's declaration* that someone actually *is in, already*. Those who are in, should live accordingly – like those who are in. If they do not, it says nothing of God's righteousness but something of their own personal commitment to God. So, Wright (2003:14) is correct that we should make sure that we understand that we are not justified by faith by simply believing in justification by faith. We are justified by believing in the gospel and living accordingly.

According to me, justification is nothing less than the missionary message of reconciliation. It is the message that people who were estranged from God are now declared to be in the right with God. It is furthermore also the message of reconciliation that declares the fact that there will be no more ethnic and cultural walls of division and

therefore it becomes imperative to do good to all (cf. Gal 6:10). In missional theology we should therefore not make the mistake to impose Western cultural paradigms or ethos as the means of converting people (see Campbell 2005:90), but realise that Paul, in a time of radical ethnic and tribal sensitivities, was a revolutionary figure in his time who deconstructed such divisive ethnic particularities in favour of an inclusive universal missionary movement.

NOTES

1 I agree with Wright (2003:1–2) that it is no longer possible to speak in the singular form of the New Perspective of Paul, for there are today many different streams of new or "fresh" (N. T. Wright) perspectives on Paul.

2 One example is that of Pope John Paul II who at the German Rabbinical Conference in Mainz during the end of the year 1980 referred to the Jews being "the people of God of the old covenant never revoked by God".

3 Weber (1880). For the complete text of Weber's book, visit the following internet address: http://www.archive.org/stream/systemderaltsyn00unkngoog#page/n6/mode/1up

4 Against those who argue that the Gospels appear to have a negative view of Judaism and especially Pharisaism, which is closer to the Weber-Bousset-Bultmann point of view, Sanders argued that the latter is the result of the polemical nature of the tension between the early church and Judaism, and does not represent the view of Judaism itself. In other words, in a polemical situation one will often find the use of vilification as a strategy. On vilification used against the Pharisees in the Gospel of John, see Van der Watt & Kok (2008a:1793–1812) as well as Van der Watt & Kok (2008b:1813–1835).

5 See Wright (1990).

6 Dunn (2008:9) developed this perspective after extensive discussions with H Räisänen on the question revolving around the problematic Galatians 3:10 in which Paul argues that those who trust in the law fall under a curse.

7 Quoted by Dunn (2008:9).

8 The NIV translates Romans 3:21–26 as follows: 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

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RICH MAN, POOR MAN IN JERUSALEM ACCORDING TO THE LETTER OF JAMES

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ABSTRACT

This article is an investigation into what the Letter of James communicates to the reader regarding socioeconomic stratifications in one of the early Christian communities. Rather than discussing economics in any single section or chapter, the author of the Letter of James makes a number of direct and indirect references to this issue. Dialectical reflections on wealth ("rich", ὁ πλούσιος) and poverty ("poor", ὁ πτωχός) occur cyclically throughout the epistle. This is part of the author's rhetoric, and his aim is to focus the reader's attention on the tension between rich and poor which was prevalent in the early church and society in Jerusalem. Each time the author returns to this topic he develops the theme further by adding new thoughts on the subject. The main issue that James wishes to address in this regard appears to be the antithesis between the rich (πλούσιοι) and the absolutely poor (πτωχὸι).

1 Introduction

The study of economics has interested people for centuries because it relates to their prosperity and standard of living. Consequently, throughout the 20th century a wealth of publications has been accumulated[1] concerning socioeconomic life in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. This article focuses on the Letter of James[2] and explores the socioeconomic stratifications and different professions referred to in this letter. This should provide insight into the type of economy that existed in one of the earliest Christian churches[3] in the first century C.E.[4]

In examining the economy of the ancient world, care must be exercised not to use the formal economic systems that apply to today's society.[5] While we cannot isolate ourselves from the economic disciplines that steer our societies, some distancing of ourselves from modern economic theory is necessary before starting to investigate the economics of a foreign world. This will enable the economic operations of that ancient world to reveal themselves in their own documentation.[6]

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In this article we will *first* consider the social stratification in the Greco-Roman world. *Second*, the possible *Sitz im Leben* of the Letter of James will be explored in order to understand the socio-historical setting in which statements about the rich and the poor were made. A *third* focus will be on the references that identify the character of the rich and the poor in the Letter of James. This investigation will be conducted from a socio-historical perspective.[7] *Finally*, attention will be paid to the different professions referred to in the letter, which will give us a glimpse into how those professions were practised in those days.

2 Social Stratification in the Greco-Roman World

It is appropriate to briefly reflect on the general socioeconomic stratification in the Greco-Roman world until the end of the first century C.E. The social concern of the Letter of James, though probably arising out of the immediate milieu of Palestine[8], was certainly affected by the wider social matrix of the Greco-Roman world of the first century. Therefore, there has to be some notion of the general, international, socioeconomic situation that possibly influenced the Letter of James with specific reference to the stratification of society.

2.1 Socioeconomic Structures in the Hellenistic Age

Maynard-Reid (1987:14) argues that before considering the role played by economics in the particular period of the Roman Empire[9], cognizance has to be taken of the economic structures in the Hellenistic Age. Rostovtzeff (1953:852−53), a pioneer in this regard, pointed out that evidence about the economic features of the Hellenistic period between Alexander and Augustus was very limited. It is also difficult to separate the economic life of the Hellenistic period and that of the early Roman Empire. In another publication Rostovtzeff (1971:91) states that the world under the Hellenistic rulers reached a level of capitalistic organisation in agriculture, industry, and commercial trading. This trend was not evident prior to that particular period, and the Romans could not surpass this.

In this period of Greek world dominance, especially by the end of the fourth century B.C.E., Greek society was divided into two groups, the plousioi and the penhte~ (Aristotle, *Pol.* 6.1318a).[10] Each individual belonged to one of these classes. These two terms can be translated as *rich* and *poor.* For Furfey (1943:245), perhaps the best translation of oi plousioi and oi penhte~ would be *the bourgeoisie* and *the working class.* This Greek bourgeoisie rested on an increasingly capitalistic economic basis. Commercial farming had increased at the expense of subsistence farming (Furfey 1943:246).[11]

The economic policy of the Greek rulers, especially the Seleucids, was part of their overall strategy. Politically, religiously and socially they wanted to keep their empire united. Export trade played an important role in the economy of the Greek empire, and generated large revenues for the rulers as well as much profit for the Greek and

native inhabitants (Rostovtzeff 1953:430; 455−64). The Seleucids created islands of Greek agriculture in the empire. They achieved this by encouraging wealthy Greek-Macedonians to emigrate and by offering them large tracts of land in the reaches of the empire (Rostovtzeff 1953:430; 491−502).

Unfortunately, the benefits of this widespread growth in prosperity only had a bearing on the great landowners. The common people did not benefit from this at all. Thus, these capitalists exacerbated the situation of the lower strata of society (Maynard-Reid 1987:15). This situation was carried over into the Roman period. Research shows that there were no drastic economic changes that were enforced by, or that emerged from, the start of the Roman era.

2.2 Socioeconomic Structures in the Roman Period

In the second century B.C.E., Rome rose to a dominant position in the East. The Roman domination did not destroy the power of the bourgeoisie, whatever changes it wrought in the personnel of the capitalist class. The *Pax Romana* proved a great benefit to commerce which seemed to be the foundation of bourgeoisie prosperity (Furfey 1943:247). The fact that Hellenism influenced life in the entire Roman Empire makes viable the suggestion that the emperor Augustus had no special economic policy. According to Maynard-Reid (1987:15; Rostovtzeff 1971:91), a policy of laissez-faire (let the people do as they think best) prevailed. Very little modification came about through the Roman economic policy. This policy of Augustus and the economic conditions of the period continued during the Julio-Claudian era (14−70 C.E.). The Roman emperors followed this policy of laissez-faire economics throughout the empire.[12] Probably the only difference between the Hellenistic and Augustan periods consisted in the application of the mechanistic worldview to the everyday problems of the marketplace.[13] White (1971:219) notes that:

> ... Rome reached a pinnacle of economic power and authority only equalled a millennium after the destruction of Rome and not surpassed until the Renaissance. It is impossible to isolate Rome's monetary and economic activities from her technological prowess. Roman success in exploitation of the natural and human resources of the Mediterranean basin was in direct proportion [to] her efficiency in obtaining, processing, transporting and distributing those natural resources, and the products made from them throughout her Empire.

Although the *Pax Romana* had positive consequences, negative consequences could never be excluded. While new groups found their way into the upper class[14] – for example, the family of Herod – and benefited from economic growth,[15] the economic situation of the ordinary people became increasingly worse. White (1971:229−31) attributes this to a new class of businessmen that emerged. They were wealthy bourgeoisie from the native populations. Their position and influence in their provincial towns enabled them to take on the tax-gathering functions. Roman technology further improved their economic situation and was used for economic exploitation which worsened the accompanying poverty. The references to the great fortunes in the Roman era should not blind us to

the widespread poverty among the masses of the people which was also prevalent in Palestine.[16] This was demonstrated by the reaction of Rabbi Ishmael when he said: "The daughters of Israel are beautiful, but poverty disfigures them."[17] It was an intolerable situation in which impoverishment and chronic insecurity were the lot of the members of the lower class. These conditions were the results of a small group of financiers who dispossessed and oppressed them.[18]

Hence, it is apparent that in both the Greek and Roman worlds we find two different socioeconomic classes: the dichotomy between "rich" and "poor". Even though the economic situation was improving in the Roman era, this improvement benefited only a very small segment of the population. The vast majority of the people lived under conditions of abject poverty.

After looking at the macro-environment, we proceed to investigate the micro-environment.

3 A Possible *Sitz im Leben* of the Letter of James

A number of scholars[19] concur that we cannot be sure about the author and dating of the Letter of James. Scholarly disputes also embrace questions regarding place of writing and structure. The impression that the relevant literature gives us is that there is very little consensus about historical matters pertaining to the Letter of James.[20]

This study will take for granted the voice of the tradition and the convincing work done by Hartin (2004). Most probably, this letter was written in Jerusalem to Jewish-Christians in the Diaspora by someone residing within the vicinity of Jerusalem (probably James the brother of Jesus), prior to the fall of this city in 70 C.E. If this is assumed, then it can be inferred that, directly the socioeconomic circumstances in Judea (Jerusalem) and indirectly the socioeconomic circumstances of the readers in the dispersion, would have influenced the author of James (hereafter James)[21] to incorporate so much socioeconomic data into this letter. This high frequency of socioeconomic data again proves how closely social and economic matters are interwoven. We will now take a brief look at these matters.

3.1 The Hypothesis of Palestine as Possible Environment of Writing[22]

It is obvious that this study cannot offer the final answer to the *Sitz im Leben* of James. It is also clear that everyone proceeds with some setting in mind. The well-known Jacobean scholar Dibelius (1976:46f.) almost totally abandoned the attempt to find such a setting or to discuss the local conditions.

Although each hypothetically proposed setting is different, the setting still colours exegesis. When reading James, the observation is neither a definite crisis in the congregation, such as one which called for the writing of 1 Thessalonians or 1 Corinthians, nor a specific persecution of Christians which called for 1 Peter 4:12 and (probably) the book of Revelation. The question that arises is whether James's continuous references

to the antithesis between "rich" and "poor" reflect a social conflict among the addressees or were due to something James himself experienced in his immediate environment. The relevant texts advise against applying the social statements of the paraenesis directly to the social structures and problems of the addressees. For precisely where these texts make reference to the communities themselves, they give the impression of being exemplary of real general occurrences. Therefore, the assumption arises that the cultural descriptions in the Letter of James describe something of the general situation in which James finds himself (and/or his readers).[23] Hence, the situations described by James could be real situations that occurred locally and generally.

This cultural data could probably fit many places. It certainly fits the situation in Palestine exceedingly well – especially the one that prevailed before 70 C.E. Williams (1987:48) is of the opinion that the overall perspective in James on poverty (and the rich) reflects the critical situation in Jerusalem around 60 C.E. This point of view is strengthened by Josephus (*Ant.* 20.199−201) who refers to the death of James under the high priest Ananus. A good case can also be made for an early dating and a close link with early Judean Christianity. This is evident from the Jewish nature of the epistle, the eschatology, the lack of references to Paul, observance of the Law and his address to those in the Diaspora.[24]

Although Josephus (*C. Ap.*1.60)[25] claims that the ancient Israelites were simply farmers, not traders, the economic necessities of life and the needs of their land turned many Jews into traders and merchants (cf. Harland 2002:511). It must be borne in mind that a limited area with a growing population simply cannot retain its total population in agriculture. Thus many people, especially youngsters, were forced off the land to allow their older family members (brothers) to earn a living. Simultaneously the influx of Hellenistic commodities[26] attracted many to gain their fortune in trade. In the coastal towns the physical location led to commercial activity. In the rural areas agriculture remained the main activity of the people. In urban areas, especially in Jerusalem, a Jewish mercantile group would probably have arisen. These Jews would have seen trade to be the quickest means of becoming wealthy.[27] In Jerusalem it was simply the religious importance of the city as the centre of Jewish life that made it an important trading city. Thus, its commercial importance and with it much of the internal commerce of the land ceased with the destruction of the temple.[28]

As regards the cultural situation in Palestine prior to 70 C.E., and to a large extent even subsequent to 70 C.E., the majority of the population consisted of peasants subsisting on a small plot of land. The size of their plots and the conditions, favouring a growing population, forced all males except the eldest son into trade (where possible) or unskilled labour. Even the resources of the eldest son were very limited so that with the occurrence of drought or similar calamities he was often forced to mortgage his fields to survive. Continued poor harvests and the economic power of the wealthy landowner (who had credited him with seed or money at rates favourable to the landowner) would frequently force him off his land. Many of these landless peasants became hired

labourers[29] or tenant farmers – often on the land they once owned – who were open to continued economic exploitation by the wealthy.

It can be inferred from this information that the most probable setting for the Letter of James is the period of the last three decades before the first Jewish War. This was after the death of Herod Agrippa I. There had been a severe deterioration in the internal stability of Palestine as well as a series of famines. Also, as the Pauline collection shows (2 Cor), the church in Jerusalem was poor in this period. Case (1971:83) asserts that Christian charity was in no way an individual affair; "it operated on a world-scale". The welfare of each Christian group was taken seriously by every other church. This occurred especially in the larger communities in the great cities. A good example is the interest the Pauline churches showed in the physical well-being of the church in Jerusalem.

Looking at Acts 2, was the group that assembled in Jerusalem after the resurrection of Jesus and Pentecost so indifferent toward the acquisition of material goods? A few years later they found themselves sorely pressed to maintain a bare existence. Probably the persons most prominent in this group were peasants and fisherfolk and manual labourers from Galilee who, when their common resources had been exhausted, found it difficult to make a livelihood in an urban environment they were unaccustomed to. Therefore, Paul collected contributions for them from the more prosperous churches that were established by him on gentile soil. Even this early on, the Jerusalem community was known as "the poor" (Gal 2:10), or "the poor saints" (Rom 15:26).[30]

During the last decade of this period the temple clergy were at odds. The wealthy high-priestly families joined the ranks of the Romans and deprived the lower clergy of their tithes.[31] One can picture what this situation did to the church in Palestine. *On the one hand*, the church naturally felt bitterness toward the rich. They had "robbed" many of the members of their lands; they probably showed discrimination against Christians in hiring their labour; and they (at least the high-priestly clans) were the instigators of attempts to suppress the church (which was probably viewed as a revolutionary movement). *On the other hand*, if a wealthy person entered the church or was a member, there would be every reason to court him. His money was seen as a means of survival. Certainly one should not offend him (cf. Burchard 2000:99).

Although one can never be sure of the setting of James, this appears to be the most likely one.

3.2 A Letter to the Twelve Tribes in Dispersion

It seems as if the church is *local*, tied to one place (2:2; 5:14), but is also *the community of the dispersed* Jewish Christians (1:1), those outside Palestine.[32] In his opening address the author of James identifies his readers as "the twelve tribes in dispersion" (1:1).[33] Hartin (2006:448; cf. Verseput 2000:99ff.) points out that by this phrase James connects to the long traditions of the past where the people of Israel looked forward to the restoration of their nation and the reestablishment of God's rule over their twelve-tribe

nation. Their hope was founded on particular events in the history of Israel. *Firstly,* this hope extended back to the time of Abraham with whom God had established an eternal covenant (Gen 17:1−8). *Secondly,* at the time of David, God's promises to Abraham were renewed through the promise of the continuation of David's kingdom (2 Sam 7:16). *Thirdly*, the prophets kept these hopes alive especially after the destruction of both the northern and southern kingdoms. The hope in the reconstitution of God's twelve-tribe kingdom was an ever-living awareness among the people over the centuries.[34] Against this background James refers to his readers as the "twelve-tribe kingdom" (2:5). He sees his readers inaugurating this kingdom. They are the "first fruits" (1:18). James in effect identifies the members of his community as the ones who are now experiencing its fulfilment and realisation. But, in this covenant relationship, if they are to attain and preserve their identity as "the twelve tribes in dispersion", they must seek friendship with God. He then outlines the type of life which members of this kingdom are to embrace. This is spelled out in "the regulation of those typical communal squabbles which were consistently a source of concern in the ancient world" (Verseput 2000:110). Most of these squabbles revolved around matters of economics and relations.

Thus James addresses his fellow Jewish-Christians in the Diaspora of that time around the Mediterranean. He tries to synthesise his circumstances in Jerusalem with the socio-religious scenario of those Jews in the Diaspora in view of the continuing relevance of his circumstances (cf. Williams 1987:48). In this study we will focus on the socioeconomic stratification that caused enormous tension in the Christian community.[35]

4 The Rich and the Poor in the Letter of James

4.1 Economics Terminology as Used in James

As mentioned earlier, when reading the Letter of James one becomes aware of quite a bit of socioeconomic data. It seems as if a sharp cleavage existed between rich and poor (1:9–11; 2:1–7; 5:1–6). The major issue which the author wants to address in this regard seems to be the antithesis (dichotomy) between rich (πλούσιοι) and absolutely poor (πτωχὸι). In this short letter the adjective "rich" (πλούσιος)[36] occurs five times, the noun "riches" (πλοῦτος) once, and the adjective "poor" (πτωχὸς)[37] four times. Other references that distinguish between rich and poor are: "gold ring in fine clothes" (2:2, χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἐσθῆτι λαμπρᾷ) as opposed to "filthy clothing" (2:2, ῥυπαρ ἐσθῆτι). Related terminology is: "to look after" or "come to help" (1:27, ἐπισκέπτεσθαι); "travelling for business and making a profit (money)" (4:13, ἐμπορευσόμεθα καὶ κερδήσομεν); "gold and silver" (5:3, ὁ χρυσὸς ὑμῶν καὶ ὁ ἄργυρος); "the wages of the labourers" (5:4, ὁ μισθὸτων ἐργατῶν); "heaped/stored up treasure" (5:3, ἐθησαυρίσατε); "luxury and in pleasure" (5:5, ἐτρυφήσατε ... καὶ ἐσπαταλήσατε).[38]

4.2 Economic Classes in the Greco-Roman World and in James

The Letter of James refers consistently to only two economic classes: rich (ὁ πλούσιοι) and poor (πτωχὸι)[39] (1:9−11; 2:2−6; 5:1). This relates to what was experienced in the Greco-Roman world. From this distinction it is apparent that we must be careful not to read back into the first century the class structure of today's Western society. We should not begin with the presupposition that the ancient world had a three-tiered class system: lower, middle, and upper class (Maynard-Reid 1978:13; Stegemann 1999). We should not insist that there was a middle class in the urban industrial and commercial segments of the population, as it is found in the twenty-first century. This applies to the whole social phenomenon of the ancient world[41] – we must allow the data to speak for themselves.

Stegemann (1999:68), concurring with Maynard-Reid, recommends a heuristic model for the determination of a person's social position in the society of the Roman Empire – the distinction between elite and non-elite.[42] The groups belonging to the elite are designated as the upper stratum; the people belonging to the masses are called the lower stratum. Both of these macrosystems could be further differentiated.

The upper stratum includes (a) the members of the Roman *ordines* (senators and their families), as well as members of the ruling houses and the leading priestly and lay families in vassal states and provinces[43]; (b) wealthy people without prominent political offices (e.g., knights); and (c) retainers (see Lenski 1966:243ff.) of the upper stratum that consists of free individuals, slaves, and freed slaves who as a kind of appendage fulfil prominent functions for the upper-stratum groups. It must also be borne in mind that because of the social structures of agricultural societies, the members of the upper stratum generally lived in the cities and only for brief periods in the country. Therefore, it would be meaningful to speak only of an *urban* upper stratum.

It seems as if "the wealthy people without prominent political offices" are the people which the Letter of James refers to as the rich. On the basis of their considerable wealth, they could exercise power in the form of influence on leading political figures and also command their own, sometimes large group of employees. Furthermore, their income enabled them to lead a privileged lifestyle. Such a lifestyle was fundamentally different from that of the masses of the populace. Due to their influence and power they could also expect privileged treatment before the judiciary, even if this was not based on law (cf. Stegemann 1999:69).[44]

The differentiation of the groups in the lower stratum is, on the whole, more complex. This group was extremely heterogeneous. On the basis of their particular place of residence and work, as well as on economic, cultural, and other grounds, they can be subdivided socio-geographically into *urban* and *rural* lower-stratum groups (MacMullen 1974:30ff.; Alföldy 1979:114).

Those who belonged to the lower stratum,[45] in comparison with those in the upper stratum, were, in principle, people who had to earn a living for themselves and their families through their own work (e.g., Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.150). This was imputable

to their minimum or total lack of property, their noninvolvement in high political offices and their lack of power; they were dependent on their own work to provide their subsistence. A further differentiation can be made with regard to the possession of property. Free farmers with their own pieces of land are different from wage earners without property and day labourers. Thus, the lower stratum can be subdivided into (a) the poor though relatively prosperous and (b) the absolutely poor. In the Letter of James the noun πτωχὸς has been used to categorise the references to the poor in the group of absolutely poor.[46] Those people live at or under the level of minimum existence. They exhibit a fundamental lack of all or some of the goods necessary to achieve subsistence (food, clothing, shelter). Here again the differences between city and country must be considered, and likewise between cities themselves. The cost of living in the cities was basically higher than in the country and also varied from city to city (Stegemann 1999:70f.).

With this background in mind we can now turn to the analysis of the text of the Letter of James in order to find out what this text communicates to us about the economic situation addressed in James.

4.3 The Rich and the Poor in James

The author of James clearly distinguishes between "rich" (o plousio~) and "poor" (o ptwco~). But who are these people in the Letter of James? I want to agree with Hartin (2006:466) in reading both these groups as being members within the Christian community.[47] The different types that these two groups consist of will now be discussed, starting with the rich.

4.3.1 The rich

According to White (1971:230), the economic conditions in Syria-Palestine undoubtedly improved greatly under the firm control of Augustus. The improvement was even more marked under his imperial successors. The Letter of James refers to three groups of rich people who benefited from these economic conditions and who can be classified as wealthy. The first group deals directly with money. James 2:6 calls these *financiers*. The second group are the *merchants* (4:14–17). The third group are the landowners and *agriculturalists*. They are addressed in James 5. In the illustration in James 2, however, a person from any one of these groups could be the focus of attention. It must be realised that these "classes" are not distinct in the sense of being three different groups of people; rather the activities are different functions of the same individual or individuals. Thus what James is doing in the final outburst in 4:13−5:6[48] is to attack the rich[49] from the perspective of two of their functions in the economic sphere. We will now look at each one individually.

4.3.1.1 **Financiers (ch. 2:6):** "*But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court?*" In this text two rhetorical questions lie parallel to one another. The reference to the "rich" in the first question refers to the same group as the "they" in the second question. Their physical oppression led to the poor being dragged into court by the rich. The impression here is that this legal action was over such issues as debts, wages, and pledges (Ropes 1961:196; Maynard-Reid 1987:63). Maynard-Reid (1987:64) accords with this point of view by also understanding the problem here to be financial, and Jewish bankers (if they can be defined as such) seem to be at the heart of this. But no sharp distinction should be drawn between bankers, rich agriculturalists, or even merchants. In the majority of cases a rich person was a large landowner, merchant, and banker at the same time. In chapter 2 James seems to refer to the specific financial aspect of oppression which resulted in physically dragging the poor to court because of their debts.

The gap between poor and rich is marked most clearly by the problem of debt (Crüsemann 1996:94). There were only limited legal means that debtors could use when it became time to "settle accounts" (cf. Luke 16:1ff.) and the debt could not be repaid. In addition to the request for an extension to or even a remission of debt, there was the possibility of blocking the creditor's actions through intervention by a person of higher rank or by a court (cf. Matt 18:31).

4.3.1.2 **Merchants (ch. 4:13):** "*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money*" (εμπορευσόμεθα καί κερδήσομεν). The persons in 4:13−17 (unlike those in chapter 5) are not called by name, but are referred to only as οἱ λέγοντε (those who say). This designation expresses the leading thought of the pericope, and it is "through their thinking that they are branded". However, the characterisation of these people in 4:13ff. requires nothing short of the characterisation *expresis verbis* in 5:1 as οἱ πλούσιοι (the rich) (Knowling 1922:108).[50]

Here James launches a vigorous attack, signalled by the ἄγε νῦν, at the business men, "the godless merchants" (Adamson 1976:178)[51], who have a blatant desire to become rich. The picture here is of the rich trader as suggested by the word ἐμπορευσόμεθα[52] − a word that occurs only at one other place in the NT where it figuratively means "deceiving another for one's own advantage, *exploit*, *cheat*" – 2 Pet 2:3 (Friberg 2000:147). Ross (1964:82) notes that this word is an "eloquent commentary on the cheating which too often attended ancient trading".

To better understand passage 4:13−17 in which the author attacks those engaged in business pursuits, we need to understand travel (Maynard-Reid 1987:71ff.).[53] The social and economic heritage of the Hellenistic world was transmitted to the Roman Empire. Syro-Palestine was one of the areas

in which certain features of Hellenistic social and economic life developed most prominently, and its economic capacities improved under Roman rule. New cities and towns were built. Communication was improved with the development of new trade routes, harbours, and warehouses (e.g., those built by Herod and his family), all of which did much for trade (Charlesworth 1961:40; Richardson 1996:188–91). In addition to those developments, mines, quarries, smelteries, and food-processing facilities were built. They not only enhanced trade and commerce, but also increased the level of economic exploitation (White 1971:230).

Although travel remained slow during the Roman period, the ease and safety of travel improved considerably. This was brought about by the unification of the empire, the ensuing peace, and the protection of the communication routes by the emperor's naval patrol squadrons and imperial police force (Rostovtzeff 1971:66). Another factor that brought prosperity for the merchants was the road system. An increasing number of well-paved roads, though built especially for military purposes, were used for commercial activities (Rostovtzeff 1971:66). These improved road systems, as well as sea travel, gradually opened new markets in many Roman provinces and gave the merchant access to all the major trade centres (Rostovtzeff 1971:66).

Obviously, then, it was relatively easy for a merchant to go from city to city or port to port "to trade and get gain" and gather great wealth. Although this picture of commercial activities throughout the empire fits the statement of James about a merchant who says he is going to go "into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain", it also seems likely that his denunciations are aimed more specifically at merchants closer to his sphere of influence – namely Syro-Palestine.[54]

Syria was important to Rome, especially because of its location as a centre for trade and industry. For many centuries Syria was famous for its merchants and the trafficking of raw materials (Charlesworth 1961:54). Even throughout the Palestinian regions of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, commercial activities were also on the upswing during Roman rule.[55] Palestine was a great land-bridge between Asia to the east and Europe to the west (as well as Africa), and between Arabia and Egypt to the south and the Euphrates and the Mediterranean world to the north, thus increasing commerce and trade throughout the Jewish lands (Grant 1973:72). Jews had long been involved in trade. During the period of the Roman Empire, travel and trade were even more brisk as merchants found more accessible markets for their products.[56]

Hence, trading and commercial activities were limited to the native aristocracy of large landowners who, according to Rostovtzeff (1971:270), were not only "rulers of the land and leaders in its religious life, but capitalists and merchants on a big scale, who sometimes add to their wealth by daring speculations".

From the above information it becomes evident that what James wrote in 4:13 is based on the socioeconomic realities of his milieu. His cry is directed at the merchants throughout Syro-Palestine for whom the accumulation of wealth was the ultimate goal. This, according to Maynard-Reid (1987:77), made the availability of raw material and the ease with which the wealthy entrepreneurs could reach their destination and then dispose of their goods more understandable because of the arrogant assertion: "Today or tomorrow we will go into such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain."[57]

4.3.1.3 **Agriculturalists (ch. 5:4):** "*Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields* (τῶν ἀμησάντων τὰ χώρα ὑμῶν), *which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters* (τῶν θερισάντων) *have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts*." In 5:1−6 James concludes his final attack on the rich. In 5:4 the author takes up the cause of the poor, oppressed, and exploited agricultural labourers − Jewish Palestine was a land shaped predominantly by agricultural economy. According to a comment by Josephus[58] (Stegemann 1999:42; Fiensy 1990:155−176) it was presumed that more than 90 percent of the population lived in rural areas. Not only did the largest part of the population have to be fed here, but also the vast majority of workers were employed in agriculture. Argriculture was, moreover, the most important basis for wealth and the object of financial investment.[59] For Cicero (*Off*. 1.150−51) the acquisition and possession of land conveys the highest social status. The more positive estimation of agricultural work also had traditional grounds and resulted from the fact that the elite of the ancient societies were especially distinguished by large landholdings. Yet these large landholders did not work themselves.[60]

It should be noted that the problem of large landowners dominating the economic scene of the first century was a matter of concern to more than just the biblical writers. Seneca (*Epistles* 90.39) denounces covetousness and human craving for excess as the cause of poverty – a craving which brought an end to the happy age of communal existence. He went on to show how covetousness brought oppression to the poor, and estate upon estate of wealth to the big landowner. Empire-wide there was an increasing concentration of rural wealth in the hands of just a few.[61] Numerous cruel pressures were exerted by the strong landowners against the weak (MacMullen 1974:6−14).

All of this fits James 5:1−3. This concentration of landownership in the hands of a few was also part of Palestinian economic life. Isaiah (5:8; 3:14−15) spoke of those who despoiled the poor by adding "field to field". By the first century C.E. this situation had become even more acute. More and more estates which were generally worked by slaves, tenants, and hired labourers were consolidated into the hands of those few with vast holdings (Heichelheim 1938:146).

4.3.2 The poor

Then there were the masses. These people were characterised not only by low birth rates and the concomitant lack of political power, but also by their poverty. For them the struggle for material existence and the bare means of survival determined their daily work (Stegemann 1999:88). Ancient terminology indicates more precise boundaries. The Greek language can distinguish between two groups of poor. In today's terms we would refer to them as relatively (πένης) or absolutely (πτωχός) poor. The noun πένης refers to "*one who works for his daily bread, a day-labourer, a poor man*[62], as distinguished from πτωχός (*beggar*)" (Liddell & Scott 1996:619). Yet πτωχός usually means the poor who live on the verge of or even below the level of existence. This use of language calls attention to the fact that there was no unified class of poor people. We must distinguish between the relatively and absolutely poor. This distinction is to be expressed basically in terms of elementary human needs, which in antiquity included nourishment (food and drink), clothing and lodging. We may presume that the great majority of the people in antiquity hardly got beyond a modest realisation of these basic needs.

If the relatively poor could still meet the basic needs of life, the absolutely poor included those who did not even have enough to live. In general, the Greek adjective πτωχός designates the following situation of the poor: they are hungry and thirsty, have only rags for clothes, and are without lodging or hope. For the necessities of life they are dependent on the help of others, for example, through begging. In addition to beggars, their numbers often include widows and orphans, but also those who are chronically ill or disabled like the blind, the lame, and lepers.

There were among the poor many individuals who with effort somehow managed to achieve a minimum existence but were constantly in danger of falling into absolute poverty. Some of these were small farmers, wage earners or day labourers in the country; some were small artisans and traders who could not adequately feed themselves and their families (Stegemann 1999:92).

4.3.2.1 **Laborers... harvesters:** "*Listen! The wages of the labourers* (τῶν ἐργατῶν τῶν ἀμησάντων τὰ χώρα ὑμῶν) *who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters* (τῶν θερισάντων) *have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts*." In 5:4 James takes up the cause of the poor, oppressed, and exploited agricultural labourers – a class which has been among the most oppressed peoples. In this text the two references (τῶν ἐργατῶν and τῶν θερισάντων) refer to the same group of people. The noun "labourers" (τῶν ἐργατῶν) refers to the stratum group to which these people belong and "harvesters" (τῶν θερισάντων) to the nature of their work. The *labourers* are hired farm workers; they are defined as the ones *who mowed your fields*. The word *mowed* (τῶν ἀμησάντων) is used only here in the New Testament and can mean "to reap" or "to harvest" (Loh & Hatton 1997:171).

Most workers were employed in the agricultural sector. Naturally, at

harvest time there was a greater demand for available workers. Agricultural work was performed by (small) farmers and their families (including women and children), tenants, wage earners[63] or day labourers. On account of the accumulation of property by a few, the number of independent small farmers constantly decreased, while the number of unpropertied wage earners and tenants grew.

Dominance of the marketplace by the big landowner, through economic manipulation both in normal and poor years, resulted in the small farmer not being able to make enough profit to take care of his basic household needs. This would drive him to give up his farm and become a labourer for the big landowner. In many instances the option left to these small holders was to obtain a loan from their wealthier neighbours. Repayment by the debtor was very difficult and the pressure exerted by the creditor for that repayment resulted in many smallholdings being confiscated. The debt-ridden owner was forced to sink to the level of a day labourer (Klausner 1947:238−245).[64] Those day labourers were the mowers and harvesters with whom James was sympathetic because of the oppression brought upon them by their employers. Such oppression was condemned in the law codes of Deuteronomy (24:14f.). Klausner (1947:180f.) also asserts that "the sympathy shown in the *Mishna* and *Tosefta* in favor of the laborers redounds to the Talmud's credit". Therefore he suggests that this sympathy was "mainly no more than an academic view never widely held in real life. That this was the reality was made clear by James' concern".

Conclusion: From this exploration regarding the rich and the poor it has become evident that a huge gap existed between the economically rich and poor. The rich used their economic power and authority to oppress the poor. This led to poor relations between these groups.[65]

4.3.3 Richness used metaphorically

"*Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith*[66] *and to be heirs of the kingdom ...*" (πλουσίους ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆ βασιλείᾳ – 2:5). By the time of the NT the social problem had become a religious issue. Poverty and piety, wealth and wickedness became almost synonymous (Adamson 1976:29). Therefore James can begin a discussion in 2:5 with a rhetorical question, "Has God not chosen the poor to be rich in faith…?", using the interrogative οὐχ as in 2:4. This question about the poor parallels the issue of the rich who are dialectically posed against it to drive the point home (2:6−7). In each case the particle indicates the expectation of an affirmative answer. The church knew well that *God* had chosen the poor.

The concept of election was deeply rooted in both Jewish and Christian thought. God chose Israel (Deut 4:37; 7:7; 14:2) and thus the Jews thought of themselves as God's elect (at times to their own detriment; cf. Coenen 1975:539). Likewise God has

chosen groups for his new people (Acts 13:17; 15:7; 1 Pet 2:9; Eph 1:4), and one of the favoured groups is "the poor". This election is based on the OT passages in which God is said to care for the poor (e.g., Deut 16:3; 26:7). This resulted in the fact that "poor" became a term for the pious in the OT and also in the intertestamental and rabbinic literature.[67] This is the background behind Jesus's declaration of the election of the poor (Luke 6:20). This declaration by Jesus certainly seems to be behind James's statement.

These Christians were largely the πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ (2:5), which reflects a situation which was true everywhere (e.g., 1 Cor 1:26), but particularly in Palestine (Gal 2:10; 2 Cor 8:9; Acts 11:29). The world sees only their poverty; God sees their exalted state because of his election of them to eschatological exaltation. They are the ones who love him and thus receive his promise (the kingdom of God is promised to the poor in Luke 6:20; Matt 5:3; cf. Matt 25:34; 1 Cor 6:9, 10; Gal 5:21). The reference to "the poor" has lost its economic value here but, as Bammel (1968:911) observes, has acquired a religious quality. Here it becomes virtually a name for the true believers (the Matthean version of the beatitude in Matt 5:3 is an accurate interpretation in part). But it does so without losing the quality of material poverty, for it is a materially poor person who has been discriminated against.[68] Out of their poverty God brings glory in the bestowal of his heavenly riches. Poor believers are not the only ones who will be saved, but they, above all, demonstrate God's gracious saving work.

Juxtaposed to his address about the dichotomy between rich and poor, James also referred to other professions of those days. We will now investigate the sense in which he referred to them and in what sense they contribute to the understanding of the economy in Palestine.

4.4 Professions Mentioned in James but not Adjudicated

In the Letter of James a number of professions are referred to. Some of them had a huge impact on the economy, others not. Those used in an actual economic situation (classified under "rich" and "poor") have already been discussed under the socioeconomic background in the Letter of James. The others will briefly be referred to now.

4.4.1 A profession used in a figurative sense

"*James, a servant* (doulo~) *of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*" (1:1). The noun δοῦλος literally means "slave". It indicates someone who belongs to a master. He is the property of his master. It serves to describe a relation of absolute dependence. Such a person has no rights of any kind but must show complete obedience and loyalty to his owner. The total commitment of the δοῦλος corresponds to the total claim of the κύριος. Alongside the will and commission of the κύριος there is no place for the will or initiative of the δοῦλος (Rengstorf 1964:270).

James uses this noun (doulo~) in 1:1 metaphorically where its denotative meaning is not so pointedly "slave", but rather "servant" (Horsley 1998:171). Louw and Nida (1989:740f., §87.81) also understand doulo~ as a term which is more or less equivalent

to "servant", "one who works without pay". When James speaks of himself as a slave of God and of Jesus Christ, the term dou1o~ focuses attention primarily on the meaning that he is the property of God and of Jesus Christ, and that they have the right to command him and use him (Louw & Nida 1989:740f., §87.76; Loh & Hatton 1997:7).

4.4.2 A profession used as identification

"*Was not Rahab the prostitute* (ἡ πόρνη) *also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road?*" (2:25). According to Louw and Nida (1989:770) πόρνη refers to a "woman who practices sexual immorality as a profession – "prostitute". In James the reference to this profession is not to its existential application; James uses the reference to identify a person.

In his discussion about the relation between faith and action, James presents to the reader two examples of how faith had to be put into action to earn the approbation of God and his salvation. In his second example he refers to the deed of Rahab. Yet James naturally chooses to dwell on her deed, using the rhetorical question οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη to elicit the positive response from the reader (Davids 1982:133).

James says little about her. Much of what he does not say is assumed. Yet James chooses to dwell on her deed (Davids 1982:132). To rule out any misunderstanding James then identifies Rahab more closely with reference to her vocation.

4.4.3 A profession used in an admonishing sense

"*Not many of you should become teachers* (διδάσκαλοι) …" (3:1). "Throughout antiquity the teaching profession remained a humble, somewhat despised occupation − it can be thrown up against Aeschines[69] and Epicurus for instance that their fathers had been reduced to it" (Marrou & Lamb 1956:145f.).

Teaching was a paid job – and, what was worse, it was badly paid.[70] Teachers did not always get paid regularly. Most teachers ran the risk of dealing with private customers. In theory they were paid at the end of each month, but parents, short of money, sometimes made them wait. It was only in the two cities of Miletus and Teos that the salaries of teachers were guaranteed by the money that came from the city's treasury according to certain definite rules.

In the early church it was a different ball game. The charismatic office of teacher was valued highly in status although not a paid vocation. To be a teacher was to occupy a position of prestige, responsibility, accountability and authority within the Christian community in the early church. Because of this many people aspired to be teachers, obviously crowding into this ministry for wrong reasons (cf. Herm. *Sim*. 9.22.2). And it is for this reason that James warns about the serious responsibilities as well as the consequences of being a teacher (Loh & Hatton 1997:100).

When James uses this word the scenario seems to be different. James clearly was preoccupied with the problem of false claims and deceit.[71] James admonished them to limit the number of teachers[72] in their midst. Self-limitations should be established.

To be a teacher within the church is something for which one should be recognised; it requires mastering the Scriptures and their application to faith and life (Richardson 2001:146). Again the reference here to "teacher" is not a socioeconomic matter, but a matter of admonishment.

4.4.4 A profession referred to in terms of functionality

"*Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot* (του εὐθύνοντος) directs" (3:4). The demonstrative particle τηλικαῦτα rendered as *look at* is used to introduce an illustration. The illustration concerns the ability of a small device to control or direct something much greater. The focus is on the size of the ship – it is so large that it takes strong winds to drive it. Although the ship is very large only a small rudder is needed to cause the ship's bow to turn.[73] Even in the harshest winds the boat will turn in the direction the pilot desires (Richardson 2001:150). The direction of the vessel depends on the will of the pilot. In relation to the next verse, the focus point in this illustration is the rudder and not the *pilot*.

From this text it is evident that the reference to a pilot is not in an economic context. Here, pilot refers to the one who steers the large ship with a small rudder. The rudder's size is insignificant in comparison to the other parts of the ship. The pilot must be someone with great training and integrity, and to whom the destiny of the entire ship can be entrusted. The same is true of teachers.

4.4.5 A profession used as an example[74]

"*The farmer* (ὁ γεωργὸς) *waits for the precious crop from the earth*" (5:7). James exhorts his Christian "brothers"2 to be patient in the midst of suffering that is caused by injustices done to them. The conjunction οὖν, translated as "then" or "therefore" in the text, closely connects the call to "patient waiting" to the previous section by reminding readers of God's opposition to the unjust rich. The sense of patience[75] in this case includes waiting and enduring until the Lord takes action on their behalf.

James used the example of a farmer who must labour without knowing what the weather will bring or how abundant his crops will be. The picture is that of the small farmer in Palestine, not the hired labourers (ergath~) of 5:4. The small farmer (ton timion karpon th" gh~ is an indication that the author has a small farmer in view) plants his carefully saved seed and hopes for a harvest, living on short rations and enduring hunger during the last weeks. The entire life of the family depends on a good harvest: the loss of the farm, semi-starvation, or death could result from a bad crop. So the farmer waits for an expected future event (ekdecetai); no one but he could know how precious the grain really is (cf. Mussner 1987:202).

Again, this reference to the profession of a farmer is evidently used here by James, not in an economic sense, but as an example of how those believers who are oppressed have to wait patiently for God's vengeance against those who execute the oppression.

4.4.6 A profession used in an eschatological sense (5:9)

"*Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge* (ὁ κριτὴς)[76] *is standing at the doors!*" Generally the idea of groaning or moaning is a proper response to painful external circumstances.[77] The problem arises when one groans, moans, or complains about (in the negative sense of "against," κατά) someone else, particularly if that person is within the community (the important functional term here is κατ᾽ ἀλλήλων). *Communal* harmony is James's concern. Most probably some moaning on account of the rich would be justified in the light of 5:1−6. The reason such a command is especially important is that "the judge stands before the door".

The judge − probably a reference to Christ[78] in the context of the Parousia of 5:7, 8 (*contra* Laws 1980:213 who understands it as the "judgment of God"), who alone has the right to criticise the Christians (4:11–12) and who will judge the complaining Christian (e.g., 1 Cor 3:10–17; 2 Cor 5:10) − who stands before the door is an image, not of the place of judgement, but of the imminence of judgement (Davids 1982:184).[79]

Again it is evident that the reference to "a judge" is not used from a socioeconomic perspective, but is in an eschatological sense attached to Christ.

4.4.7 Conclusion

The Letter of James is a short letter, but it refers to quite a number of professions. None of them were used in their existential environments or with regard to their economic contributions. James used all of them in order to explain some kind of principle or aspect of that vocation.

5 CONCLUSION

In this research it became evident that in antiquity prosperity occurred and increased in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. Unfortunately, the gap between the rich and poor widened. James addresses similar situations. It also became evident that the Letter of James is saturated with socioeconomic data. Cyclical reasoning on socioeconomics occurs throughout the letter. Every time he addresses this topic he incorporates new aspects from the socioeconomic stratum. The major issue for James was the dichotomy between the two socioeconomic classes of the rich (πλούσιοι) and the absolutely poor (πτωχὸι).

Throughout the investigation it also became evident that nothing written about socioeconomics in the Letter of James contradicted a Palestinian environment. The situation which James found himself in, and which influenced his writing, surely fitted the Palestinian circumstances although it could also fit other areas in this Roman era. According to this research then, it is reasonable to conclude that the dichotomy between rich and poor was a "real concern for James".

NOTES

1 Some of the data have come from a reworking of the classic texts. More have come from research on inscriptions, papyri, and archaeological finds; see the extensive work of, among others, Rostovtzeff, Heichelheim, Stegemann, Alföldy, Charlesworth, Grant, Hengel, and Lenski.

2 Maynard-Reid wrote an excellent monograph in 1987 called *Poverty and wealth in James*.

3 In such research we must be cautious not to apply generalisations about a community's economic situation to early Christian communities.

4 A follow-up publication is planned to explore the negative relations and attitudes between the "rich" and "poor" that also occur in the Letter of James. It is to be published in the next edition of *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* under the heading: "Rich man, poor man – socioeconomic relations between the rich and the poor in Jerusalem according to the Letter of James."

5 Harland (2002:511) explains that in antiquity people did not discuss the economy and economic issues in the way we do: "...the modern compartmentalization of life into political, social, economic, and religious sectors would be difficult to comprehend; these aspects of life in general comprised a unified whole for those living in 1st century Palestine."

6 See online http://community.middlebury.edu/~harris/Classics/EconomicsinGreece.html 07_05_2009; Harland (2002:511f.).

7 Please note that, from the fourth part, each reference (text) under discussion is given in italics. This study on socioeconomics in James could also have been done according to the relevance and sequence of the four major pericopae (1:9−11; 2:1−13; 4:13−17; 5:1−6) as they occur in James. A more systematic approach guides the modus operandi followed in this study.

8 A verification of this statement will follow later.

9 Rostovtzeff (1953:1301) states that one of the most important features of the Hellenistic social and economic life, carried over into the Roman Empire, was the unity of the Hellenistic world. This was due to the highly civilised city-states which absorbed in their peculiar development many Hellenistic features and came into close connection with the Hellenistic countries.

10 "… ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ δύο μέρη τετύχηκεν ἐξ ὧν ἡ πόλις, πλούσιοι καὶ πένητες, ..."

11 He refers to the fact that much of the territory remained in the hands of the natives.

12 This was sensible in Egypt and Syro-Palestine (Maynard-Reid 1987:15).

13 Rostovtzeff (1971:91) pointed out that differences started to emerge in the degree of their development as well as in the emergence of new factors.

14 See Gager (1975:93−113) for a discussion on "the Roman social order".

15 According to Rostovtzeff (1971:91) the most important feature of economic development in the Roman period was the "gradual resurrection of economic life in the provinces. Urbanization was the continuation of an evolutionary process which began long before the Romans." Thus "urbanization meant here the formation of a city *bourgeoisie*". This *bourgeoisie* comprises a class of landowners, traders and industrialists who resided in the cities. They developed energetic business activities along capitalist lines (Gager 1975:93). If this happened throughout the empire, then it can be assumed that it also happened in Jerusalem.

16 Harland (2002:511) agrees on this point.

17 Mishnah *Nedarium* 9.10

18 In his interpretation of this situation, Maynard-Reid (1987:18) concluded that in the end "it was not merely political dissatisfaction or religious fanaticism that brought unrest throughout the empire. The root cause of the misery was economic".

19 For example, Dibelius (1976:45−47); Martin (1988:xxxiii); Loh & Hatton (1997:1); Verseput (2000:99ff.); Martin (2002:123); Botha (2005:391). For a definite confirmation that James was the author, see Furfey (1943:251); Kümmel (1975:412); Adamson (1976:18f.); Manton (1995:13); Wachob (2000:165). See Davids (1982:3) for a table of different opinions by various scholars. Davids (1982:2−22) selects "James the Just" to be the author after a thorough analysis and discussion on *date* and *authorship*. For Johnson (2000:155; 167) James is the "brother of Jesus" from Jerusalem, if not, then "an original and compelling witness". Johnson (2000:155) also points out that "those who have studied the text carefully have also been persuaded by many small and converging details suggesting it could well have been written by Jesus' brother. The results of contemporary research tend to support authenticity and an early date." See also the thorough work of Hartin (2004:117−140; 2006:445).

20 This article will not become involved in the debates around authorship, place and time of writing.

21 See footnote 19.

22 In this subsection I rely heavily on the work done by Davids (1982:28). This is because he describes the possible background to the Letter of James from an economic perspective, which fits and closely relates to the economic situation of James.

23 Cf. Mussner (1987:80–83) who gives a fuller exposition of James's economic situation. This commentary differs with Adamson (1976) in arguing (1) that Adamson narrows the time span too closely and (2) that he overestimates the Hellenistic influence upon James. The same general picture appears in Martin (1978:97–103). Unfortunately, he takes Hegesippus's reference to Vespasian who besieged Jerusalem just after the death of James too seriously and thus suggests a priestly setting in the 60s, which unnecessarily narrows the time span as well.

24 See Childs (1984); Mussner (1987); Wuellner (1978); Adamson (1989); Hartin (1991).

25 "...the cities we dwell in are remote from the sea, and having a fruitful country for our habitation, we take pains in cultivating that only".

26 Schürer (1891:29–50) presents the facts of the influx of Hellenistic goods such as public institutional games, public baths, public inns, architecture. Not only are coins and governmental terms Greek, as one would expect in occupied territory, but commercial terms and even names for common domestic items appear in Aramaic as Greek loanwords. These data suggest an influx of trade from surrounding countries, especially during the pre-70 period of prosperity. Jesus also witnesses such trading activity (e.g., Matt 13:45–46); cf. Jeremias (1969:31–57).

27 The evidence for this situation was collected from Grant (1973:72–76); Heichelheim (1938:150); Klausner (1952:184–192).

28 On the natural disasters which compounded the economic problems and caused something of a decline in the pre-war period, cf. Jeremias (1969:140–144). Baron (1973:102–108) says that apart from the loss of human lives caused by the wars and rebellions in the first century C.E. in Palestine, the Jews also suffered considerable political reverses. They were politically paralysed by these things. Instead of being in a position to lend moral and political support to the Diaspora Jewry, it became economically a liability and politically a handicap. Still a certain amount of normalcy speedily returned to the land, despite the Talmudic sayings about famine. Since most of the farms were not expropriated, agricultural life was probably back to normal by

75 C.E., although population reduction due to the war probably meant the easing of some food shortages and led to other permanent changes. Trade recovered more slowly, and in Judea much of the trade never recovered, for it had depended upon the temple and the political and religious activity it attracted to Jerusalem.

29 In Palestine landlords used hired labourers rather than slaves, as in Italy, to work their large estates. This practice was partly due to the religious requirements connected with slaveholding. The preference for hired labour may explain the lack of references to slavery by James, who is otherwise concerned about oppressed classes.

30 When this group of Christians was forced to leave Jerusalem due to the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66−70 C.E., some of them probably settled beyond the Jordan and became the ancestors of the sect called the Ebionites, referred to as "the poor" (cf. Case 1971:42).

31 Josephus, Ant. 20.180–181; Martin (1978:99)

32 Davids (1982:63−4); Mussner (1987:2−23; 60−61); Johnson (2000:155); Wachob (2000:165).

33 In this study the term *Diaspora* designates the Jewry living outside the land of Israel. It was already common in ancient times (2 Macc 1:27; cf. John 7:35) and actually means "scattering". Within the Roman Empire in New Testament times there were Jewish Diaspora communities in Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, on Crete and Cyprus, in Egypt and Cyrenaica, and finally also in Italy. The most important were in Syria, Alexandria, and Rome.

34 Verseput (2000:99−104) discusses convincingly how the prevalent notion that Israel's dispersion would one day be overcome by divine deliverance following national repentance echoed repeatedly throughout Second Temple Judaism and beyond. In these texts an authoritative centre, typically Jerusalem, consoled the assembled communities in the Jewish Diaspora in the midst of the affliction occasioned by their evil circumstance and admonished them regarding their covenant responsibilities in the hope of the expected restoration. In each of the extant texts of this type (Jer 29:1−23; 2 Macc 1:1−9; 1:10−2:18; Baruch 4 and 5; 2 *Baruch* 78−86) the specific content of the instruction varies, but the tone of consolation in tribulation and the appeal to the motivational power of the future hope remain constant. Among some early Christians there was a firm belief that a part of the work of the Messiah was the restoration of "the twelve tribes". See Wachob (2000:165) for the verification of this statement.

35 As I pointed out in the introduction, the relationships and conduct between the different socioeconomic groups will be investigated in a follow-up article.

36 Jas 1:10, 11; 2:5, 6; 5:1

37 Jas 2:2, 3, 5, 6

38 See Harland (2002:511−527) for a thorough discussion in "The economy of first-century Palestine: State of the scholarly discussion". Most of these references will be discussed in the follow-up article "Rich man, poor man – socioeconomic relations between the rich and the poor in Jerusalem according to the Letter of James" as referred to in footnote 4.

39 Stegemann (1999:71) describes this group of poor people (πτωχὸι) as absolutely poor. They live at or under the level of minimum existence, and are those who exhibit a fundamental lack of all or some of the goods necessary to achieve subsistence (food, clothing, shelter). With regard to this group we must also consider the differences between city and country, but also between cities themselves, since the cost of living in the cities was basically higher than in the country and also varied from city to city.

40 MacMullen (1974:89) claims that statistically there was a middle class. At the top of the social pyramid stood the aristocracy, which included the extremely prominent and rich nobility; at the bottom was a large mass of the totally indigent, both free and slave; in the middle class was a heterogeneous variety, which was too dissimilar to be called a middle class. Scroggs (1975:9) also argues that there was scarcely a middle class at all. However, he asserts that "some trading, a small fishing industry, scattered artisans, and a few government officials composed the middle class". He also refers to Jerusalem, the largest city, that was reasonably small and many of the people living there were without stable means of livelihood. Jeremias (1969:100) in his chapter on the "Middle Class" refers to the small industrialists or craftsmen who were independent and did not hire out themselves for wages as a member of the middle class. However, he also states that "we rarely come across evidence for the economic situation of this class". After Hengel's (1974:37) statement that there were members of Christian communities in all strata of the populace, he deduces that "the majority of early Christians will have belonged to the 'middle class' of antiquity". But just on the following page, in contrast, Hengel argues that "Paul himself says that the communities were predominantly poor and we have no reason for mistrusting him" (cf. 2 Cor 8:2). See in this regard also the work of Malherbe (1983:86).

41 Cf. Furfey (1943:245) and Aristotle, *Pol*. 6.1318a

42 Although different terminology has been used (elite vs. non-elite; upper stratum vs. lower stratum; rich vs. poor; bourgeoisie vs. working class) it seems as if it refers to the same phenomenon, namely the dichotomy between "rich" and "poor".

43 Gager (1971:102f.) pointed out that during the early Roman Empire there was the Senatorial class and below the senators in social as well as legal status were the equestrians or knights. They were the capitalists in business, commerce, and industry. Along with these capitalists were the various municipal bureaucracies of the empire. Here we find Rome's policy of maintaining good relations with its conquered people displayed in its attitude to the religion and customs of these people. Hence, Jewish residents in cities throughout the empire and particularly in Jerusalem were allowed to elect their own bureaucrats and follow their ancient religious practices. Palestine was a classic example of how religious life and socioeconomic and political factors were closely bound together. In Palestine the aristocratic Sadducees dominated the Sanhedrin (especially during the Hadrian dynastic rule) and remained loyal to Rome (cf. Rhoads 1976:150−53). These men were not only leaders in society and religion; they were also capitalists and merchants on a large scale who obtained much of their wealth through speculation, lodging it in the national bank, that is, the Jerusalem Temple (Rostovtzeff 1971:270).

44 Scroggs (1975:17) points out how the earliest traditions show unmitigating hostility towards the wealthy (see Mark 10:23−27; Luke 6:20−26; 16:19−31; Matt 6:24; 13:22; 19:23−24; 1 Tim 6:10). Furfey (1943:243f.) explains how these texts should be interpreted: "The renunciation of riches as a counsel of perfection raises no problem. It has a solid basis in the New Testament. The difficulty arises from the texts, which, taken in isolation, appear to mean that to be rich (πλούσιος) is to endanger one's salvation, not merely in certain special cases but in the case of the average Christian. The solution to this problem hinges on the interpretation of the word πλούσιος."

45 See Cicero for a distinction between different classes of trades and occupations (*De Officiis* 1.152−4).

46 According to Malina (1993:106), there is a series of passages in which the word "poor" is used in the company of other words that describe the condition of the person who is labelled "poor".

Luke 4:18 has a quote from Isaiah in which the poor are those imprisoned, blind, debt-ridden. Matt 5:3ff. as well as Luke 6:20−21 have the poor ranked with those who hunger, thirst and mourn. Matt 11:4−5 lists the blind, lame, lepers, death, and the dead with the poor, while Luke 14:13, 21 has the maimed, lame, and the blind grouped together with the poor. Mark 12:42−43 and Luke 21:2−3 speak of a poor widow, and Luke 16:20−22 tells of the poor Lazarus who was full of sores, hence ill, leprous. Finally, James 2:3−6 points out the shabbily dressed poor man as truly powerless, while Rev 3:17 considers the poor to be wretched, pitiable, blind, and naked – something like the list in Matt 25:34ff. that consists of the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, and imprisoned. This is the lowest group of the lower stratum according to Stegemann (1999:304).

47 This is due to "the internal logic and the structure of the sentence" (Hartin 2006:466).

48 The two pericopae 4:13−17 and 5:1−6 both have the identification mode of introduction − ἄγε νῦν. Careful reading of both passages gives the impression that the ideas are parallel (Maynard-Reid 1987:68).

49 According to Stulac's (1990:99) research, James is formally addressing non-Christians in 1:10 as later in 5:1−6 but saying this really for the benefit of his Christian readers who were suffering at the hands of rich persecutors. He wrote 1:9−11 to encourage these Christians who were generally suffering hardship economically nevertheless to rejoice in their real exaltation in Christ. If these oppressors were not Christians, then it might have been a question of religious persecution. The context implies that these men in question were Christians, for James had just been talking about the way the rich were treated in the sunagwgh;n (Furfey 1943:251). See Hartin (2006:466) who sees the rich as also being members within the Christian community. For this author James's reference to the "rich" can refer to both those inside and outside the church. This is not a matter of "either or" because the poor have contact with both groups.

50 Jeremias (1969) points out that even priests were engaged in commerce.

51 "James is obviously not rebuking his readers for making detailed and wise business decisions in advance. The problem is that they make plans without the Great Planner; they leave God out of their planning" (Loh & Hatton 1997:159).

52 Literally *travel for business, carry on business, trade* (Friberg 2000:147).

53 The two verbs πορευσόμεθα (*go, journey, travel, proceed*) (Friberg 2000:323) and ἐμπορευσόμεθα (literally *travel for business, carry on business, trade*) (Friberg 2000:147) clearly prove that these merchants undertook journeys.

54 Cf. Jeremias (1969:27ff.) who is of the opinion that the whole of the region of the Near East (Syria and Palestine) was economically interdependent. Their commercial characteristics overlapped. Hartland (2002:515) agrees on this view: Palestine was part of the larger economic world.

55 Jeremias (1969:27) refers to Pseudo-Aristeas which describes Jerusalem as "rich in trade".

56 Kautsky (1968:50ff.) asserts that commerce and transportation were not distinct in those days. The merchant had to bring the goods to the market himself. See Maynard-Reid (1987:76ff.) on the prosperity and fertility of Palestine.

57 See Maynard-Reid (1987:77) on his references to Jewish and non-Jewish literature.

58 *C. Ap.* 1.12: "We Jews of Palestine neither inhabit a coastal land nor do we have the joy of trade and the concomitant intercourse with foreigners. Rather, our cities lie far from the sea, and we occupy ourselves primarily with the cultivation of our excellent soil."

59 Cicero, *Off.* 1.151; cf. Also Hartland (2002:515).

60 According to Furfey (1943:245) the essential mark of the πλούσιος was his ability to be self-supportive by operating with his own capital. The πένης, on the other hand, had to rely on his own labour. The consequence is that the πλούσιος could be at leisure (σχολάζειν) free from any necessary routine work. The πένης lived from his daily toils. The πτωχός (the really poor person) had to survive without a penny to his name.

61 Cf. Hartland (2002:512) on the maximisation of society's utilities, production and distribution by specific groups to their own advantage over other groups.

62 The noun πένης does not occur in James, only πτωχός as a reference to the poor. The noun πένης occurs in the NT only in 2 Cor 9:9.

63 Of great importance were the (free) wage earners, above all at harvest time. Wage earners were apparently needed only in larger agricultural units.

64 Klausner also notes that in some cases the children would be forced to become hirelings or labourers since the smallholding sufficed only for the eldest son who received "a double share" of the inheritance. Outside Palestine such a person could also sell himself into slavery to the rich landowner.

65 Some of the labour relations concerned with economic matters as referred to in the Letter of James will be investigated in a follow-up article.

66 πλουσίους ἐν πίστει, "rich in faith," is what they are "elected" to − the sphere of the riches of God's grace (cf. 1 Cor 1:5; 2 Cor 9:11; Eph 2:4; 1 Tim 6:18).

67 See Sir 10:22–24; *Pss. Sol.* 5; 1 *En.* 108:7–15; cf. Bammel 1968:895–898; Davids (1982:111). According to Davids this background supports the declaration by Jesus regarding the election of the poor (Luke 6:20). This declaration is behind the statement made by James.

68 Πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ is a *dativus commodi*, "poor in the view of the world", not "poor with respect to worldly belongings".

69 Demosthenes (*De Corona* 18.257−8): "But do you − you who are so proud and so contemptuous of others − compare your fortune with mine. In your childhood you were reared in abject poverty. You helped your father in the drudgery of a grammar-school, grinding the ink, sponging the benches, and sweeping the school-room, holding the position of a menial, not of a free-born boy."

70 The most detailed documentary evidence about this is to be found in the epigraphical school-charters in Miletus and Teos. In Miletus a teacher received forty drachmae a month, in Teos five hundred drachmae a year. In both cases this was slightly higher than the pay of a skilled workman, which was usually a drachma a day, although the difference was not sufficient to give the teacher any appreciably higher standard of living.

71 The Shepherd of Hermas also refers to self-appointed teachers and teachers of wickedness in the church (*Herm. Par* 9.19:2; 22:1, 3).

72 A "teacher" is one who holds something of an office within the church; cf. Acts 13:1; 1 Cor 12:28f.; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 1:11; *Did*. 15.1f.; 13:2.

73 See Loh and Hatton (1997:104−5) for a discussion of several linguistic problems in this verse.

74 Cf. also the reference to a prophet: As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the *prophets* (τοὺς προφήτας) who spoke in the name of the Lord (5:10).
Note the radical shift in tone from "you rich" in v. 1. I disagree with arguments that place the rich outside the Christian community simply because they are not among James's addressees.

75 μακροθυμέω ("have patience", "wait", also in v. 8; cf. Heb 6:15 and the sense of absolute dependence upon God; Job 7:16; Sir 2:4; Bar 4:25) can refer to God's forbearing ways (Prov 19:11) and that which is at the heart of *agape* love (1 Cor 13:4). Thus it can be a Christian virtue that imitates one of the attributes of God; cf. Matt 18:26, 29; 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Pet 3:9; 1 Clem. 49.5.

76 "... as one who makes decisions based on examination and evaluation … used of both divine and human judges (Matt 5.25; Acts 10.42)" (Friberg 2000:238).

77 Mark 7:34 − Jesus; Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 5:2, 4; in the LXX the term is a frequent expression of Job, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, but Heb 13:17 says one should not make others groan.

78 They are to be patient, enduring "until the Parousia of the Lord". Two basic interpretations of this phrase have been offered. One group (noting that in chs. 4 and 5:1–6 it is God who will judge and that this theme is common in the OT and apocalyptic presentations of the final judgement) argues that it is not the coming of Christ but the coming of God in judgement that is intended. The majority of commentators note the strongly Christian tone throughout James, the doubtfulness of references to the Parousia of God, and the common technical sense of Parousia in the NT, and therefore argue that the event referred to here is the coming of Christ (1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1; 2 Pet 1:16; 3:4; 1 John 2:28; Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; cf. Oepke (1967:865–871); Braumann (1976:898–901); Dibelius (1976:242–243); Mussner (1987:201); Laws (1980:208–209). This seems to be the most reasonable position, for James is not a thinly Christianised Jewish document, but a thoroughly Christian one; it is hard to see how a Christian writer could mean anything else by this term, and it is easy to understand how James, like most NT writers, could refer to God as judge in one instance and to Christ in the next (e.g., Revelation). The Christian hope, then, is the coming of Christ when all the wrongs suffered will be set right (Davids 1982:182).

79 Mark 13:29 par. Matt 24:33; Rev 3:3, 20; cf. the sense of the parable in Matt 24:45–51 par. Luke 12:42–46; Mark 13:34–37.

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EXCOMMUNICATUM: THE MONO-EPISCOPATE, THE THIRD-CENTURY CHURCH, AND ORIGEN

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ABSTRACT

Origen's departure from Alexandria is a well-known event in the history of the early church. According to Eusebius, who provides the most thorough account of Origen's life, this move had everything to do with Origen's rocky personal relationship with the bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius. Origen's relocation to Caesarea, however, is best understood within the framework of the structure and evolution of the third-century church, especially the emergence of ecclesiastical authority and communal organisation. Rather than a centralised church under the authority of the bishop, Christian communities at this time were more decentralised, with presbyters and house churches holding considerable autonomy. The fact of this communal structure raises questions about the nature of excommunication: while it is possible that all the Alexandrian churches chose not to receive Origen, it is unlikely that all the churches would have reached this consensus. It is more probable that Origen chose not to return to Alexandria after he left.

1 Introduction

Origen's departure from Alexandria is a well-known event in the history of the early church. According to Eusebius, who provides the most thorough account of Origen's life, this move had everything to do with Origen's rocky personal relationship with the bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius. Later writers, including Jerome and Photius, add that at Demetrius's behest, two synods were convened – one banishing Origen from Alexandria and the other stripping him of his newly attained appointment to the presbyterate. While modern scholarship is critical of some aspects of these accounts, it has accepted that with the support of other bishops the bishop of Alexandria had the power to banish Origen.

Origen's relocation to Caesarea, however, is more complicated than the narrow

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lines along which scholarship has defined it. Rather, it is best understood within the framework of the structure and evolution of the third-century church, especially the emergence of ecclesiastical authority and communal organisation. These two issues in particular raise questions about the authority of third-century bishops relative to their community: in the third century, could the bishop have decided to excommunicate a member of his church without the consent of his congregation? Were such decisions communal or the sole right of the bishop?

In order to explore these questions, this study will begin by examining the late antique biographical sources on Origen in order to establish the common assumptions they hold regarding the power of the bishop. Next, it will consider the evolution of the mono-episcopate and powers of the bishop in the third century, looking broadly at developments throughout the churches of the empire. To this end, one important consideration is the physical structure of Christian communities and how it affected the centralisation of power in the hands of the bishop. Lastly, these developments will be used to suggest a new way of regarding this critical episode in Origen's life.

2 Biographical Sources

Biographical information for Origen is limited, fragmentary, and conflicting. As noted above, Eusebius's discussion in the *Historia ecclesiastica* is the most detailed account, though its reliability has been questioned by scholars in light of Eusebius's apologetic aims. Based on the lost *Apology for Origen* by Pamphilus, Eusebius stresses Origen's towering genius but glosses over some of the less-flattering periods of his life, particularly his relationship with Demetrius (Grant 1980:24–25).[1] From Eusebius's vague references, Origen's relocation has been connected to the outcome of a synod (or synods) that was held following his ordination in Caesarea (*Hist. eccl.* 6.23.4).

At these synods, was the matter at question Origen's theology, the validity of his ordination or the rights of sees to ordain? In his *Panarion* (64.2–64.3), Epiphanius provides an alternative presentation to that of Eusebius, claiming that Origen apostatised and was thus expelled from the Alexandrian church (64.2).[2] During their famous feud at the height of the first Origenist controversy, Jerome and Rufinus added several supplemental details. Jerome emphasises Origen's ordination as the catalyst for the conflict with Demetrius (*Vir. ill*. 54), as well as Origen's theology (*Epist.* 33.4).[3] In his rebuttal to Rufinus, Jerome suggests that Origen was condemned for proposing salvation for the devil.[4] In addition, he mentions a large synod held after Origen's ordination, attended by churches from Alexandria, Cyrenaica, Rome, Palestine, Syria, Arabia and Greece (*Epist.* 33) and notes that at this synod Origen was excommunicated from the Alexandrian church.[5] Rufinus, well mired in the Origenist controversy as he was, goes to great lengths to defend Origen's theology, quoting part of a letter written by Origen himself.[6] Photius (*Bibl.* 118) holds that Origen's ordination sparked the conflict with Demetrius, and he adds that at a second synod attended by Egyptian bishops, Origen

was deposed of his office (*Bibl.* 118.6–15).[7] The Byzantine Suda records two traditions regarding Origen's relocation: that Ambrose asked him to move to Caesarea and that Origen had been forced to sacrifice to pagan gods while at Alexandria, thus resulting in his expulsion. However, these accounts should be questioned on multiple grounds, the first of which is the use of *excommunicatum* to describe the outcome of the synod, a term that is rare in first through third-century texts; second is the prominent role that Demetrius played in the excommunication.

Recent scholarship has accepted that Origen was condemned and banished from the Alexandrian church, though it varies as to whether Demetrius or Heraclas was the responsible party. Nautin (1977:61), Daniélou (1955:23), Cadiou (1944:318) and Trigg (1983:140) all hold that Origen was condemned at a synod of bishops led by Demetrius, and subsequently expelled from Alexandria. Trigg, however, contends that Heraclas also banished Origen from Alexandria at a later date (1983:207). Jakab argues that Origen was deposed at the second synod (2004:171).

Though these accounts – both ancient and modern – provide different explanations for Origen's relocation and conflict with Demetrius, they share a basic assumption about the nature of the third-century church. They hold that the bishop was not only the representative for the Alexandrian church regarding orthodoxy, but that he also had the power to act without consulting his congregation, and needed only the support of other bishops.[8] Moreover, the picture of the bishop presented in the late antique accounts is that of the monarchical bishop, which is anachronistic. While this was an accepted fact of ecclesiastical structure by the time of Eusebius, in the early third century the office was just emerging and developing out of the pre-existing duties of bishops.

3 The Office of the Bishop

The term *episkopos* does not appear frequently in the New Testament, once in Acts 1:20, quoting Psalms and then in the Pauline letters. Initially, bishops were presbyters (Campenhausen 1997:85; Rapp 2005:26). In 1 Timothy 3:1–2 a bishop is described as a moral leader, able to provide hospitality and to teach. Likewise in Titus 1:7 a bishop is exhorted to be a lover of hospitality, moral and an example to his congregation. There are a few references to multiple bishops or deacons, as in Philippians 1:1.

In terms of functions, bishops were overseers; this was an aspect that would remain central to the responsibilities of bishops and one that would also grow in importance. Hippolytus, writing in the early third century, notes that Zephyrinus administered the affairs of the Roman church as part of his duties as bishop (*Haer.* 9.1).

As administrators, bishops were responsible for managing the distribution of charitable donations. This could involve dispensing money, food, and clothing. Rome, for example, sent charity well outside of the city itself, including to Christians working in nearby mines (*Hist. eccl.* 2.3.10). Justin Martyr notes that the president of the church is the one who makes sure that widows and orphans receive donations (*1 Apol.* 1.67).

According to Apollonius, a Montanist bishop in Phygria was in charge of appointing people to collect money, organising gifts that had been received, and offering salaries to preachers (*Hist. eccl.* 5.18.2). Tertullian in *De fuga in persecutione* says that the bishop is responsible for financial affairs, and though he does not elaborate, this is likely a reference to the oversight of donations (13).

Bishops were also entrusted with certain ritual functions that only they could perform or could allow to be performed, notably the blessing of the Eucharist and baptism. Though it is not clear how often Christians celebrated the Eucharist, the bishop was primarily responsible for bestowing it. Justin Martyr mentions that at Rome the president of the church blessed the Eucharist, and deacons distributed it (*1 Apol.* 1.45–7). Ignatius likewise notes that the bishop was responsible for the Eucharist, though he could entrust this to another church official if needed (Ign. *Smyrn.* 8).[9]

Regarding baptism, Ignatius makes this a sole function of the bishop, and one that cannot be entrusted to another figure (Ign. *Smyrn.* 8). Though Tertullian later claims that all members of the congregation have the right to perform the same functions as the bishop, in *De baptismo*, he too notes that baptism was performed by the bishop alone (17). In the *Traditio apostolica* of Hippolytus the bishop is assisted by presbyters and deacons, though he is the one who performs the ceremony (21).

Beginning in the late second century, the role of judge appears in connection with the duties of the bishop. Hippolytus notes that the bishop is able to judge who stays among the clergy (*Haer.* 9.6). Origen says that even though someone had sinned among the Christians of Caesarea, he was still a member of the church until he had been cast out by the judgment of the bishop (*hom. I–16 in Lev.* 14.2.1).[10] However, this aspect of the bishop's power is not absolute; it did not displace the rights of the Christian community to forgive a sinner and welcome him back to the church. This is exemplified by the edict mentioned by Tertullian in *De exhortatione castitatis* (1) and *De pudicitia* (21): the bishop – probably Callistus in Rome – issued an edict forgiving sins. However, Tertullian is critical of this power, and later notes that it is only the congregation as a whole that can forgive sins (*Exh. cast.* 21). The bishop must bring the sinner before the church, and the congregation then has the right to forgive or not (*Exh. cast.* 13.7). Origen likewise places reproving of sinners with the church as a communal right, not with the bishop alone (*hom. I–16 in Jos.*7.6). Eusebius records that during the episcopate of Victor, Natalius, who was a follower of the banished Theodotus the cobbler, decided to return to Victor's community. He had to ask for pardon from both Victor *and* the congregation before the community allowed him to return (*Hist. eccl.* 5.28.12).

There is evidence, however, that some saw the power of the bishop to grant forgiveness as a right of the bishop and not the entire community. For Callistus, forgiveness was a prerogative of the bishopric. He gathered around his house church those who had been expelled from worship at other places. This is not an attempt, as Hippolytus describes it, to fashion a church of miscreants, but rather it is an expression

of the power Callistus felt that he wielded.

Regarding matters of theology, the bishop did not have absolute say within his community. Cases in point involve figures such as Marcion, Valentinus, and Apelles. In a letter to Abericius Marcellus, Apollinarius notes that the church of Ancyra in Galatia was split over Marcionism (*Hist. eccl.* 5.16.3–4).[11] The Roman community was also divided over whether or not the teachings of these figures were acceptable – some clearly held they were, while others did not. Though later sources describe the conflict in terms of orthodoxy and heresy – with the bishop on the side of orthodoxy – in the second century, the bishop was not the only figure who defined orthodoxy. It was itself a fluid term: the community chose who they admitted or excluded.[12]

Bishops were the representatives for their respective communities – the church's public face – as well as a liaison to other Christian communities. From the first century onwards, bishops were involved in corresponding with other churches.[13] Eusebius records numerous references to the bishop as letter writer. Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, wrote letters to the churches of Lacedaemonia, Athens, Nicomedia, Gortyna, Amastris, Knossus and Rome, in addition to a few personal letters. Dionysius's letters to churches range in topic from attempts to establish uniformity of belief against Marcion to welcoming the new bishop Philip at Gortyna (*Hist. eccl.* 4.2.3). One was written to the Cnossians urging the bishop Ponytus to be more forgiving regarding charity (*Hist. eccl.* 4.23.7–10). Ponytus's reply, though summarised by Eusebius, reminded the interfering bishop to tend to his own community! Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, penned a joint letter to the church at Antinöpolis (*Hist. eccl.* 6.11.3).[14] Alexander also wrote to Origen during the Decian persecutions and to Antioch, congratulating the newly appointed Antiochene bishop.[15] The bishop of Antioch, Serapion, wrote numerous letters and works according to Eusebius, who acknowledges that the works are preserved by others. One letter, to an otherwise unknown Domnus, addresses apostasy (*Hist. eccl.* 6.12.1–2). Another letter, or possibly two, was written to Pontius and Caricus, who were churchman, though the topic of the letter(s) is unknown.

In addition to letter writing, bishops sometimes acted as representatives of their churches in person as ambassadors, though this was a function shared with presbyters and deacons (Ign. *Trall.* 1). In the mid-third century, Cyprian describes two men who jointly served as bishops, carrying letters to other churches as ambassadors of their respective communities (*ep.* 40 and *ep.* 44). The bishops of Asia Minor and Syria were active in synods and refuting heresies. Firmilian, the bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, attended a synod regarding Novatus, though this is slightly after the time of Origen.[16]

While the above powers are attested in sources from the first through third centuries, the late second and early third centuries witnessed an expansion in the powers of the bishop.[17] As the numbers of Christians increased, the bishop's charitable and administrative duties likewise expanded. However, increased numbers of Christians and a growing emphasis on theological consensus also served to expand the authority of the bishop. It cannot be assumed that such attempts were met with approval; indeed, there

is evidence that there was some opposition to these changes.

From the late second century, some bishops began to establish the boundaries of their communities regarding membership and theology. Zephyrinus's successor Callistus provides evidence for communal tension. This is well documented in the works of the Roman Hippolytus, though he receives little mention in Eusebius.[18] While Hippolytus presents Callistus in the worst possible light, Callistus was picked, according to the practices of the time, to follow Zephyrinus as bishop (*Haer.* 7). After becoming bishop, however, it seems that Callistus's orthodoxy was called into question, following the banishment of Sabellius (*Haer.* 7). The mud-slinging that followed between Hippolytus and Callistus involved questions of orthodoxy, and, as many hold, marked a split among Roman communities. Callistus began offering forgiveness of sins exclusive of the approval of his community as a means of attracting more followers (*Haer.* 7). While much must be allowed for the degree of venom displayed by Hippolytus, what we have in the figure of Callistus is a man who saw the office of bishop as including the power to absolve sins. By allowing people into his community who had been expelled from other communities, Callistus was both expanding his authority as bishop to grant forgiveness and attempting to define boundaries for his community. As bishop, he was attempting to define what was and was not acceptable behaviour.

Similar events occurred at Alexandria, though they are not as well documented. Heraclas followed Demetrius as bishop (*Hist. eccl.* 6.27.1).[19] Eusebius provides scant information about his episcopate, and while other sources offer little more, a brief reference in a letter from Dionysius to Philemon is illuminating. Here, Dionysius discusses the practice of rebaptism, and expresses his belief that regardless of where one received baptism – be it at the hands of heretics or not – one baptism is all that should occur (*Hist. eccl.* 7.7.4). However, he notes that this opinion is in contrast to that of Heraclas, who held that if someone had been baptised by a heretic, he should receive rebaptism at the hands of the orthodox. By allowing for rebaptism, Heraclas is doing much the same thing that Callistus did in Rome. He is effectively deciding what is and is not orthodox. By defining one type of baptism as invalid, Heraclas must have extended this to those who performed the baptism, thus defining them as unorthodox. This is set in comparison with his own church, which performed orthodox baptisms. From the account in Dionysius, this was aimed at Gnostics, and would of course have been based on a criticism of theology as well as practice. Therefore, as bishop, Heraclas was actively involved in defining orthodox theology.

From these examples, it is clear that by the early third-century, bishops were starting to exercise increased influence. Particularly, they were beginning to define the boundaries of their communities, especially in terms of membership and belief. However, some of these attempts were met with resistance, as in the case of Callistus. This indicates that the powers of bishops were predicated on the willingness of their own communities and those around them to follow.

However, the structure of Christian communities is an additional seminal consideration when examining the power of the bishop. Regarding the commonly

accepted contention that Demetrius banished Origen from Alexandria, given the powers of the bishop and the communal structure that was in place at the time, could he realistically have cut Origen off from *all* the Alexandrian Christian communities? Even if supported by the bishop of Rome (who held no elevated position relative to other bishops at this time), was this feasible in the third century? Given the nature of worship at Alexandria, the house-church model would have made this impossible without the consent of the whole community.

4 Community Structure

Despite the size of its home city and the influences it had on the development of theology, little is known about the ecclesiastical organisation or physical place of worship of the Alexandrian church. Eusebius provides the most thorough account, and the picture he gives of the Alexandrian church in the third century is in fact a fourth-century view that presupposes a monarchical bishop and centralised place of worship (Jakab 2004:216).[20] Eusebius considers the structure and organisation of the fourth-century church to be normative for earlier periods (Jakab 2004:179). Some historians have posited that Alexandria was a single-church community by the third century, a development that would be unique for this time (Trigg 1983:10).[21] While a single church or several large churches would have been the standard during the fourth century when Eusebius compiled the *Historia ecclesiastica,* during the second and third centuries, such is most likely not the case.[22]

Regarding the activities of the Alexandrian church prior to the bishopric of Demetrius, there is little information given. It participated tangentially in the Quartrodeciman controversy (*Hist. eccl.* 5.23), and aside from brief references to Alexandrian writers, Eusebius offers little more. Of worship in Alexandria, Eusebius reveals even less. He makes no references to places of worship or the nature of services. Even supposing he had such information at his disposal, the church in the third century was a far cry from that of the fourth, and such information may have been excluded because of its contradictory nature.[23]

Archaeologically, there are no remains from the period in question. Epiphanius mentions there was a Church of Dionysius (*Pan.* 69.2.4), most likely named after bishop Dionysius (247–264 CE), though there is no physical evidence of it (Haas 1996:208). The martyrium of Mark likewise is mentioned by Ephiphanius (*Pan.* 69.2.6) but does not appear in any earlier literature or remains (Haas 1996:213). Of the two centres, because of the significance of Mark to the Alexandrian church, it is possible that his martyrium existed prior to the fourth century, though this cannot be validated.[24]

However, despite lack of information for Alexandria itself, there is no reason to suppose that Alexandria differed markedly in communal structural development from other cities in the Empire (Grant 1971:133–44). While literary sources for Alexandria may be lacking, there is a relative wealth of comparative literature available for other cities (Lampe 2003:364). New Testament writings offer an invaluable glimpse into the

structure of the earliest Christian house churches, which would have been the basis of Christian communities for many centuries to come. Also, Christian archaeological and literary sources for Rome are excellent compared to other parts of the empire.

In the period in question, the house-church model was still the dominant means of worship for Christians. This model is illustrated by New Testament references. Acts 2:46 describes the gathering of Christians over a shared meal. When Paul speaks to the leaders of Ephesus, he mentions that his teaching had carried him from house to house (Acts 20.20). Likewise, in Romans, Paul sends his greetings to a house church (16.5).[25] The number of house churches varied from community to community, though for larger cities, there most likely would have been multiple house churches operating simultaneously. These house churches began as informal affairs, directed by an elaborate social network. Paul's travels through the empire are the earliest evidence of this. Paul stayed at the homes of individuals and patrons. Through his letters, he procured housing for fellow Christians. Earliest Christianity depended on the social organisation of these house churches (White 1990:101–105).[26]

For most cities in the empire, it is difficult to estimate the numbers of house churches with certainty. However, there is enough information for Rome to allow for some tentative assertions to this effect. According to Lampe, the communities at Rome were spread out among five to seven different areas within the city, many along major roads coming into the city. Using the pre-Constantine titular houses as evidence of earlier places of worship, Lampe numbers these between fifteen and twenty (Lampe 2003:364). The Roman Christian community then, was geographically spread out and comprised of many small house centres; indeed, though written later, the Liber pontificalis says that during the episcopate of Clement, Rome was divided into seven districts under the supervision of notaries (Loomis 2006:4). Under Evaristus (ca. 99–108 CE), there were numerous parish churches within the city of Rome (Loomis 2006:6). These satellite churches were most likely small. Using Rome as a model, it is probable that house churches were the main means by which Christians gathered for worship and that there were numerous communities spread throughout cities.

The organisation of early Christian communities into individual house churches has larger implications for community structure: the physical space that early Christians utilised had an enormous effect on how Christian hierarchy functioned.[27] The fact of multiple house churches was one check on the rising power of bishops. The houses Christians met in were the homes of members of the congregation. Though this is not absolute, in many cases these members would have been wealthy individuals.[28] These two aspects afforded them a measure of respect and even influence in their own right. While house churches were the dominant means of worship, power was shared among many members of the Christian community (the house owner and/or presbyters and the bishop). Thus, as noted by Lampe (2003), disparate and multiple places of worship go hand-in-hand with decentralised ecclesiastical power.

However, as the numbers of Christians grew, the need for more space became

pressing. In answer to this need, new places of worship began to emerge. *Domus ecclesiae* were modified homes that included larger interior rooms for worship. Just as the house-church model served to limit the powers and duties of bishops, the development of the *domus ecclesiae* and later churches would help to increase it (Brent 1995:222–225).

Domus ecclesiae begin to emerge roughly in the early third century. The earliest extant Christian *domus ecclesia* comes from Dura Europos, and its modification to a *domus ecclesia* is dated to 240–41 CE (White 1990:7, 18–19). Though Dura is the earliest archaeological example, the *Edessene Chronicle* suggests that such changes took place at the beginning of the third century (White 1990:118). Also, it has been speculated that the *titulus Clementis* and the *titulus Byzantis* were in use in the third century (White 1990:114–116). These architectural changes reflect significant social developments in the third-century Christian community. The community had grown to the point where it had the need and the resources available to modify its current building into a place more affable to its needs. Thus, as more Christians met at a central location, this lessened the number of house churches needed. And, with less house churches needed, power became concentrated in the hands of fewer officials.

This is part of a centralising process that took place in the third century together with an increase in demands made on the bishop. I venture that the advent of more centralised places of worship, while not a result of the increased authority of bishops, helped to accelerate it by diminishing the role of the presbyter as a leader of his *own* community, and placing him in a subservient position to that of the bishop. More centralised locations resulted in more centralised authority. Likewise, centralisation would have contributed to a growing sense of belonging and exclusion.

However, it must be emphasised that during the early third century, this transition is *in the process of occurring*, but not realised. Thus, while some areas are witness to the emergence of *domus ecclesiae*, house churches are the dominant means of worship, and presbyters and house owners retain a high degree of authority over what happens in their churches (Campbell 1994:256). Likewise, while the power of the bishop is increasing in some aspects, particularly as it relates to an increased number of Christians, it is not absolute in others.

5 Significance for Origen Studies

Returning to the issue of Origen's excommunication from Alexandria, the above observations about the power of bishops and communal structure raise serious questions about the accepted scenario that Origen was banished as a result of the synod of bishops. Given the limits to the bishop's power due to the house-church model and thus authority of presbyters, in order for Origen to be excommunicated from the Alexandrian church, it would have required a consensus of all the house-church leaders in the city, which may well have been a sizable number. Demetrius did not have the authority to excommunicate Origen without the support of the entire Alexandria community. Later accounts that

mention a council of Egyptian bishops are suspect for the same reasons: while Demetrius (or possibly Heraclas) instigated a council of Egyptian bishops to discuss Origen, at this time, such a council did not have the authority or ability to excommunicate Origen from *all* Alexandrian house churches without the agreement of all the presbyters or the house owners who presided over these communities.

From Eusebius onward, there is no reference to Origen returning to Alexandria after his departure, a fact that many have taken as support of his excommunication. While it is possible that all the Alexandrian churches chose not to receive Origen, it is questionable whether all the churches would have reached this consensus. The sheer variety of teachings present in the church at this time makes it implausible that Origen's teachings would have been universally condemned by the Alexandrians. It seems more likely that Origen chose not to return to Alexandria after he left, though without Origen's letters, it is impossible to ascertain for certain that he did not. However, following the death of Heraclas, Origen did correspond with the new bishop of Alexandria, Dionysius the Great. Again, had Origen been excommunicated, such correspondence seems unlikely.

NOTES

1 This in contrast to Nautin 1977:25–26. For further discussion on the apology and its reception, see Williams 1993:151–169.

2 For further discussion of Epiphanius, see Lyman 1997:445–451.

3 Jerome contends that Origen's objective is to malign Demetrius: *cumque ille tota epistula Demetrium, alexandrinae urbis pontificem, laceret, et in totinus orbis episcopos et clericos inuehatur* (2.18.13–15). Nautin noted this: "Le nom de Démétrius n'est donc qu'une conjecture de Jerôme" (Nautin 1977:166). However, Nautin holds with Jerome that the goal of the letter was to malign a bishop; rather than Demetrius, it was Heraclas that Origen intended.

4 Nautin supports this interpretation (1977:172). For a fuller discussion of the validity of this claim, see Holliday 2009:1–23.

5 Jerome also mentions Origen briefly in his *Chron*.

6 In the second half of the letter, Origen clearly states that he has been charged with blasphemous teachings, though it is not clear whether they come from the bishops or from another church member. This charge rests on an accusation that Origen proposed salvation for the devil, a charge that was referenced by Eusebius, as well as by Jerome. Origen proceeds to give details as to how his work came to be interpolated; he also mentions sending out a correct copy of the work in question. Rufinus also notes that he had read another letter of Origen where Origen made a similar defence.

7 See also Junod 2003:1089–1102 and Grant 1980:77.

8 This is typical of ancient biographies. See Cox 1983:70–101 for a discussion of Eusebius's life of Origen.

9 See also Ign. *Pol*. 5. Of all the church fathers, Ignatius seems to provide the earliest example of a monarchical bishop. In his letters he describes his office as one with considerable influence over his community. However, as noted by Maier, Ignatius's power is not as clear as it appears. Rather than wielding power as a bishop per se, Ignatius is expressing and normalising the authority

already present in Christian communities (Maier 1991:181). Much of his comparison of the ecclesiastical hierarchy with that of heaven should be read against the backdrop of theological discussions in Asia Minor, and are attempts to strengthen one position over others (Maier 1991:187).

10 See also 14.3.3 and *Comm*. *Matt*. 12.14. Origen, who emphasised that the bishop needed to be moral above all else, places the bishops as judges of those who had sinned (*hom. I-16 in Lev* 14.2.1). Bishops must be moral in their judgment of sinners (*Comm. Matt*. 12.14).

11 See also *Hist. eccl*. 5.16.10–17 and 5.16.22.

12 A more common response to questionable teachings was a rebuttal rather than an excommunication. Serapion, the bishop of Antioch, addressed the issue of heresy at the nearby Christian community of Rhossus. According to a letter fragment, a certain Marcrianus had been promoting the Docetic theories contained in the *Gospel of Peter*, and he had found ample support among members of the Rhossus community. Serapion was active in the theological debate; he wrote a refutation of the *Gos. Pet*. and sent it to Rhossus (*Hist. eccl*. 6.12.2–6). Rather than condemn Marcrianus as heretic, Serapion included in the lost portion of his letter a list of questionable passages from the *Gos. Pet*. for the edification of the Christians at Rhossus (*Hist. eccl*. 6.12.6). At Caesarea, Origen refuted heretical statements. In a homily on Psalm 82, Origen singles out the Helkesaites as proponents of questionable teachings. Rather than dismiss them, Origen goes on to demonstrate the failure of their interpretations (*Hist. eccl*. 6.38.1).

13 Maier, citing Turner, notes that this is one way in which the authority of the bishop increased (Maier 1991:104).

14 There is no indication as to why Alexander was writing to this church, nor is there any earlier evidence of ties between the two communities. Eusebius preserves only a fragment of the letter, primarily to evidence the fact that Alexander's co-bishop Narcissus was indeed over one hundred years old.

15 The last letter was written shortly after Alexander was released from prison and most likely after the death of Narcissus, who is not referenced in the letter. Alexander explains that he was unable to write during his imprisonment and wanted to extend his congratulations to the new bishop. As courier, he used Clement of Alexandria, whom he said, would be recognised by the new bishop (*Hist. eccl*. 6.11.6). In his letter to Origen, Alexander refers to Clement as his benefactor and master (*Hist. eccl*. 6.14.9). The general interpretation of the letter fragment from Alexander to Origen regarding Clement is often misinterpreted. Alexander says that Pantaneus taught Clement, who was his [Alexander's] benefactor and master, and that through Clement, he met Origen. Some historians take this to mean that Alexander and Origen studied together under Clement, though this is not clear from the fragment. Is it through the teachings of Clement, that Alexander was introduced to those of Origen? Or was it a physical introduction? Again, it is ultimately unclear, if not unlikely.

16 Firmilian frequently invited Origen to visit Cappadocia, and likewise visited Origen at Caesarea (*Hist. eccl*. 6.17.1); see also *Vir. ill*. 54.

17 Eno, citing Nautin, notes that there were five areas where episcopal authority developed during this period: 1. centralisation of the bishop's power; 2. sacralisation in the person of the bishop; 3. the emergence of an episcopal hierarchy; 4. establishment of relations with civil authorities; and 5. the growth of attitudes and behaviour appropriate to the development of ecclesiastical offices (Eno 1976:44–50); see also Nautin 1973:47–58.

18 It would seem that Eusebius was quite unaware of the problems arising at Rome during Callistus's

episcopate; he devotes very little space to Callistus (*Hist. eccl*. 6.21.2).

19 In Eusebius's account, he is notoriously silent, not appearing at regional synods nor participating in the affairs surrounding Origen. He had been trained in philosophy and seemed to have been a well-known personage prior to becoming bishop (*Hist. eccl*. 6.15.1). He was the brother of one of Origen's students who was killed during the persecutions (*Hist. eccl*. 6.2.2). Julius Africanus reports that he came to Alexandria expressly to meet with Heraclas (*Hist. eccl*. 6.31.2). It is unknown when he became a presbyter, but it must have been before Origen moved to Caesarea. In a letter fragment of an unknown date, Origen mentions that Heraclas was a presbyter prior to Origen's departure from Alexandria, and that the two had met at a philosophical school (*Hist. eccl.* 6.19.13).

20 See also Telfer 1962:104.

21 This supposition is reflected in the bishop list Eusebius used for Alexandria, which creates a clear line of descent from Mark to Demetrius. Prior to the bishopric of Demetrius, Eusebius lists twelve bishops, beginning with Mark (*Hist. eccl*. 2.16). Of the next eleven bishops, they are little more than names. Annianus followed Mark as administrator (*Hist. eccl*. 2.24) and died in the fourth year of the rule of Domitian, 85 CE (*Hist. eccl*. 3.14). His successor Abilius died in 98 CE and his successor Cerdon died in 110 CE. From Eumenes to Julian, bishops served for an average of eleven years each. The reign of Demetrius, which lasted forty-three years, has more information than all the previous eleven bishops combined, and what Eusebius reveals is scanty.

22 For a fuller discussion, see Meeks 1983: chapter 3; White 1990:101–105.

23 However, in this case, Eusebius may have had some information in Origen's letters. The first part of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was based on an autobiographical letter of Origen (Nautin 1977:19–29). In addition to providing information about Origen's early life and training, it also supplied Eusebius with knowledge of Origen's teaching activities. Despite this possibility, the whole of Eusebius's account is unsatisfactory and supports a point made by Grant: Eusebius was troubled by the information he unearthed concerning the disparate Alexandria church and went out of his way to make it obscure (Grant 1971:133–44).

24 See also Jakab 2004: Chapter 1.

25 See also Col 4:15.

26 In addition to house churches, some historians have posited that Christians met in cemeteries and catacombs. Christian cemeteries and catacombs appear slightly earlier than the Dura-Europos house, though their ownership status is less certain. One of the most frequently discussed is the Callistus Catacomb, which is dated to no earlier than 200 CE. Though some contend that this property is indicative of early Christian ownership, Lampe has demonstrated that it was the personal property of the Bishop Zephyrinus. Hippolytus's description of the business relationship between Callistus and Zephyrinus suggests that Callistus was an administrator for Zephyrinus, and this included administration of Zephrinus's family property (*Haer*. 9.12.14).

27 In addition to places of worship, literary sources suggest the possibility of other types of buildings: the famous catechetical school of Alexandria and communal repositories of church documents. Given Origen's activities at Alexandria and Eusebius's claims of a catechetical school, is it possible that there was a building set aside for this purpose? While most scholars hold that Origen's school was of the open-air, philosophical variety, the problem of a possible library at the disposal of his students raises the issue of space. At Caesarea, where Origen compiled the enormous *Hexapla*, perhaps this is a more acute problem; while at Alexandria, his books most likely were kept in his home. Writings from other church fathers suggest similar

situations regarding schools, libraries and repositories for church documents. In the second century, Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Philadelphian church, mentioning a confrontation he had over certain biblical verses (Ign. *Phld*. 8.2). As Gamble notes, Ignatius's repeated references to *archeion* are significant, though they can have multiple meanings: in addition to meaning the Jewish scriptures and early documents of the church, it also can refer to an actual place where writings were kept (Gamble 1995:152–3). The churches of Justin, Marcion, and Valentinus, not to mention the copious literary references found in Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, all indicate availability of a large number of texts. While many of these could have belonged to personal libraries, the references of Tertullian to "the membership roll (census), the members of the clerical order (*ordo sacerdotalis*), and the order of bishops (*ordo episcoporum*)" point to the possibility of a church archive where such records would have been kept (Gamble 1995:152–3). The Liber pontificalis' section on Anteros, bishop of Rome from 235–236 CE, mentions that he "collected carefully from the notaries the acts of the martyrs and of the readers and deposited them in the church" (Loomis 2006:20.1). Likewise, Eusebius's masterful history was drawn from a repository of church documents, partly from Caesarea and partly from Jerusalem. Eusebius notes that Alexander preserved many letters written in the third century at a library in Jerusalem. (*Hist. eccl*. 6.20) Included in this group were letters from the bishop of Arabia at Bostra, Beryllus, as well as letters from Hippolytus, "who also presided over another church somewhere" (*Hist. eccl*. 6.20). Given that some of these documents date to an early period, it is possible that they had been stored in an archive for several hundred years. However, despite Tertullian's suggestion of an archive, they are not attested to archaeologically during this period. Rather, it is more likely that such works were kept in the homes of members, as were such things as possible bishop lists. Lastly, there is no record of any church owning property in its own name during this time. Homes could have functioned in the same manner as house churches: it was space offered by a member for the use of the church.

28 Maier notes that typical community leaders were *patres familias* with large homes (Maier 1991:4).

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CONSOLATION OF THE BEREAVED: REFLECTIONS ON THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS FROM A POST-MODERN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the origin and inherent meaning of pastoral care, biblical and theological perspectives no longer shape the practice of all pastoral work in a postmodern context. In this essay, boundaries of time, culture and disciplines will be crossed to view consolation of the bereaved in the early church from a postmodern perspective, more specifically, through the lens of narrative therapy. The essay aims to explore the value of revisiting representative examples of consolation literature from the 2nd to the 5th century C.E., as part of the classical tradition of pastoral care and counselling. It will be argued that the ancient practice of consolation, rooted in the Christian narrative, can in fact be investigated as one of the first rudimentary examples, albeit unwittingly, of narrative therapy. The reading of these classical pastoral authors may also encourage us to think critically about the purpose and practice of pastoral care in our postmodern society.

1 Introduction

In the postmodern world a new ethos is shaping the culture in which Christian pastoral care is offered. Pastoral care inevitably reflects the philosophical assumptions and values of the time. In this era of religious fundamentalism, pastoral care – and the theological reflection that has to accompany it – has the task of putting the Christian tradition in which it is rooted in dialogue with the postmodern world. This is a world in which reality is relative, and where there is no independent truth. The Christian voice will only be heard when there is openness to talk in a non-confronting way, and when the *Story of God* and the Christian principles of kindness, compassion, service and tolerance bring healing and hope to a broken world.

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Pastoral care, according to its ancient definition and origin, has always connected the *Story of God* and his redemption in and through Jesus Christ with the actual life stories of people. Therefore, biblical and theological perspectives, rooted in the gospel of salvation, should guide all pastoral work. But in our society and time biblical and theological perspectives no longer shape the practice of all pastoral work. Pastoral care has been influenced by the ever-increasing body of secular knowledge and paradigms, at the expense of its origins and its God-given values and mission (Lynch 2005:13).

The result is a pastoral practice that has diminished the reality of God. In this regard John H. Armstrong (2001:37) has made a strongly worded appeal: "It is time that we thought more intentionally about reforming pastoral ministry by the Word of God alone."

Pastoral theology and care can be reclaimed as a theological discipline, *inter alia* by examining classical texts from the tradition of pastoral care. A thoughtful reading of early general works on pastoral care and other relevant texts could force a re-evaluation of many of the assumptions that shape contemporary pastoral work.

The purpose of this article is to examine the practice of consolation of the bereaved by selected fathers of the early church, both from a postmodern perspective – more specifically, through the lens of narrative therapy – and from the perspective of the tradition of pastoral care rooted in biblical truth. This is done with a view to investigating an alternative model of pastoral care as a kind of Christian ministry in a postmodern context. The theory and practice of the early church fathers will be integrated with current theories of pastoral care to form an alternative practical-theological theoretical basis. In the context of this article pastoral care is understood as one aspect of the *praxis* of Practical Theology.

In the pastoral tradition of the early Christian church the word "counselling" was used to refer to a wide range of ministries, many of which are now usually called "caring". It covered discipline as well as consolation; it was used for ongoing spiritual direction as well as episodic crisis intervention; it was a concept which covered directiveness as well as empathy; social needs as well as individual ones; well-being at all levels of life, not simply emotional health (cf. Bridger & Atkinson 1998:125). In our postmodern context the word "counselling" has a more restricted meaning: "'Christian counseling' as now commonly understood is but one aspect of a broad concept of Christian caring ministry" (Bridger & Atkinson 1998:125).

Selected texts from the consolation literature of the early Greek and Latin church fathers of the first five centuries C.E. have been examined as representative examples of the classical tradition of pastoral care. These include selected works of the Latin fathers Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine, as well as of the Greek-speaking Cappadocian fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus) and of John Chrysostom.

In terms of pastoral care in the early church, there is ample evidence that the clergy were actively engaged in private conversations with members of the church, to offer counsel and comfort, to guide and sustain and to encourage them to penance

and reconciliation. In spite of a relatively small number of primary sources on pastoral care *per se*, and no verbatim accounts of pastoral conversations in the early church, we have access to a large number of letters and treatises involving pastoral care. From those sources we are able to discern the pastoral issues and how they were dealt with. In antiquity, letters functioned not only as private correspondence; they were copied and circulated among friends, strangers and even enemies. The contents of letters functioned as extended discussions in a time before electronic mail.

For reasons that will become obvious this article will focus on two texts in particular, namely St Jerome's *Letter* 60 (addressed to Heliodorus on the death of his nephew Nepotianus) and John Chrysostom's *Letter to a Young Widow*. Appropriate elements of these two letters will be examined both from classical and postmodern perspectives. Brief references to other works will be made where relevant and applicable.

But first a few introductory remarks are in order, with a view to setting a frame of reference for the examination of the selected texts.

2 Frame of Reference

2.1 Pastoral Care – Biblical Notions

In terms of pastoral care we will briefly look at the biblical notions of "Shepherding the Flock", the "Story of God", "Hope" and "Empathy".

2.1.1 Shepherding the Flock

At the very heart of pastoral care lies the notion of "shepherding", and in a Christian context, shepherding according to the example of Jesus Christ as the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11–18). In his public life and appearance Jesus epitomised the Good Shepherd, as he carried out the duties of the traditional Old Testament leaders: he expressed *wisdom* in the Sermon on the Mount and in his parables; he acted as *prophet* when he cleansed the Temple (John 2:19–21) and in his confrontations with the Pharisees and Sadducees; and he fulfilled his *priestly leadership* both in relation to his followers and as the priest who "had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:12, NIV).

From early Christian times to the present the leader of a church or community has been designated with the pastoral image of the "shepherd of the flock". In the writings of the early church fathers the shepherding motif often appears "as the organizing metaphor par excellence for the work of the pastoral leader" (Gerkin 1997:27).

The shepherd-pastor looking after his flock was seen as a continuation of the mission of Jesus incarnate in the world. Yet the shepherd imagery runs the risk of, on the one hand, fostering dependency and submissiveness (since sheep are not the most intelligent of creatures), and on the other hand the possibility that it may lead to an authoritarian interpretation of governance.

2.1.2 The *Story of God*

Pastoral care is rooted in the belief that the Bible provides us with an overarching narrative or meta-narrative in which all other narratives of the world and of human beings are nested. Contrary to postmodern trends, the early Christians regarded the narrative of Jesus Christ as *the* meta-narrative, through which all other narratives were to be understood, including each person's own story (Loughlin 1996:20). When a human being wove his/her own story into the *Story of God*, he/she could make sense out of suffering and trauma (cf. Hauerwas 1990:145; Lindbeck 1984:34).

A pastoral counselling conversation should proceed from and lead to the Word of God. The counselee is thus confronted with questions that the Word of God puts to him/her, but also with the life and hope proclaimed in the Word – in other words, with the truth of *God's Story* (Thurneysen 1963:11–31, 109). Although the Bible can be used for diagnosis, instruction and comfort in a counselling conversation, and as a valuable resource and aid to exploring a counselee's inner dynamics, several theologians and authors (e.g., Hiltner 1958 and Oates 1953) warn against the misuse or indiscriminate use of the Bible in pastoral care.

2.1.3 Hope

Christian pastoral care and counselling should ultimately offer hope to a person in need. The Christian counsellor has grounds for hope in a specific theological foundation of hope, found in God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promises, as seen in the biblical narratives of the exodus and the exile, and in the resources of hope available in Jesus Christ (Bridger & Atkinson 1998:245–267). In a context of human suffering, hope is linked to two important theological moments: the passion of Christ and the victory of the resurrection (cf. Moltmann 1967). All troubled persons need some affirmation that there is hope – not in the abstract or in theory, but actually *for* them, in their particular circumstances. It is the task of the pastoral counsellor to enable and empower them to find their own resources to discover and sustain such hope. Pastoral caregivers and counsellors have to be agents of hope.

To bring a troubled person to a point where he/she can hope again, is a central ingredient of a therapeutic process (cf. Oates & Lester, 1969:18; Sphar & Smith 2003:49–50). A counsellor, as "bearer of hope", should guide a person to think about the traumatic situation in another way, especially in light of the objective and fulfilled promises of God.

2.1.4 Empathy

Empathy is one of the key components of effective counselling. In a counselling context it refers to willingness on the part of the counsellor to cross personal boundaries and to stand with someone else in his/her pain, and so to communicate an understanding of the painful situation, without becoming submerged by it. The incarnation of Christ and his becoming a servant among us as referred to in Philippians 2:5–7 is the model

of Christian empathetic involvement. Just as the incarnation witnesses to the God who does not just diagnose or analyse man's needs, but actively participates in them, likewise effective counselling is not just objective diagnosis of the counselee's suffering, but active empathetic involvement.

Christian caring and counselling thus should be an embodiment of the Word. Carroll Wise (1966:13– 14) referred to "an additional factor, a nonverbal expression of the meaning of the gospel through the relationship of pastor and person". The pastor's/ counsellor's involvement demonstrates and gives living substance to the message of God's grace. Without an empathetic and participatory involvement with others in their experience, there is no revelation and self-discovery, and no discovery of God. Empathy is the precondition of all therapeutic effectiveness (Oden 1984:18).

2.2 Postmodernism

In terms of postmodernism just a few remarks will suffice. Postmodernism is difficult to define, because to define it would violate exactly that which it claims to be – a phenomenon with no boundaries or absolute truths. Postmodernism maintains that truth can only be found within – in a person's own private experience and perspective.

It is not simply a chronological period, but a complex and broad cultural phenomenon arising in particular in capitalist societies of the late twentieth century. Loughlin, a Professor in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University, refers to postmodernism as "... not the dawning of a new age, but of a day without a tomorrow, a time without a future. Postmodernism is the idea that the once-hoped-for future of the human race has arrived" (1996:4–5).

The French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984:37) taught that post-modernity announces the demise of the modern meta-narratives – whether religious, political or scientific (Loughlin 1997:42). A meta-narrative transcends all boundaries and stands over and above all other narratives (Bridger & Atkinson 1998:279).

Postmodernism is what happens when master stories lose their appeal and become incredible. In due course the master stories of Modernism (e.g., Darwinism, Marxism, Freudianism, and Socialism) started to show flaws and lost their credibility to such an extent that it seems to Lyotard that there are no meta-narratives left. We now have to make up our own individual, little stories to make sense of the world (cf. Lyotard 1984:xxiv; Loughlin 1996:9). Postmodernism sees meta-narratives as a means of oppression, because of their totalising character (Erickson 1998:110).

Christian theology has responded to postmodernism in several ways, of which I will briefly mention only two.

Nihilist postmodern theologians (e.g., Mark Taylor and Don Cupitt) believe that there is no Christian story, no meta-narrative, probably in reaction to the devastating effects of the modern master stories (Bridger & Atkinson 1998:280). These theologians assume that a true story can be measured by reality. But when there is no reality or objectivity and rationality, or when reality is relative, when everything is a story, when

even religion is a product of narrative, no narratives can be measured by reality. Stories can only be measured by each other. The master story is this: there is, finally, only nothing. This radically differs from the Christian story, which teaches that there is in fact nothing beyond *God's Story*.

Orthodox postmodern theologians, (e.g., George A. Lindbeck, John Milbank and Gerard Loughlin), believe that all stories are measured against the story of Jesus Christ, which is the truth, and not against reality. This story is open-ended and truly postmodern, because it is a story about the future, of what is to come after the present; it is always provisional because it is not yet ended (cf. Gerkin 1986:48; Loughlin 1996:24). Christians believe that there is one unifying story, a single history, which includes all human beings of all times. This story is the biblical narrative of God's love and grace for fallen humankind in and through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christianity is postmodern because it is not founded on anything else than the performance of its story, and because *God's Story* imagines a world "out of nothing", a world in which people are life-narratives with a future (Loughlin 1996:21).

Orthodox postmodern theology therefore maintains that there still is a meta-narrative, namely *God's Story*, of which the story of Christ is an integral part. Without such a meta-narrative man's story doesn't make sense, and without a meta-narrative there is no hope. Trauma and suffering cause people to ask questions about the meaning and purpose of adversity. One way of finding answers is through stories or narratives. In a Christian context we make sense out of life and tragedy by recounting the story of a transformative religious experience. Henri Nouwen (1977:24–25) refers to us connecting our human stories with *God's story*.[1]

2.3 Narrative Therapy

Before we can examine the selected early Christian letters through the lens of narrative therapy, a few introductory remarks are in order.

When the early preachers and evangelists (e.g., Peter and John [Acts 3], Stephen [Acts 6 and 7] and Saul/Paul [Acts 9]) were asked to explain what they meant with their talk about God, salvation and revelation, they turned to the stories of their lives in an attempt to answer the questions. In this they followed the examples of the prophets and the early Jews who always spoke of history, of what had happened to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of the deliverance from Egypt, of the covenant of Sinai, and of mighty acts of God with and among them. The inspiration of religion lies in the history of religion, a history related through stories (Niebuhr [1941] 1989:23). Some of the earliest forms of Christian theology are life stories. "If early Christians were well able to discern how the stories told about the events of Jesus' life contained the keys to understanding God's startling presence among them, the question quickly arose as to whether the stories believers began to tell about the very different circumstances of their own lives had a similar power" (Graham, Walton & Ward 2005:48). Both societies and individuals need stories in order to construct their world creatively.

Narrative therapy is based on the notion that we generate stories in an effort to make sense of our lives and the circumstances in which we find ourselves (White & Epston 1990:10). In the therapeutic context different kinds of stories are at play: meta-narratives or master stories, dominant stories, alternative stories, problem-saturated stories, and new stories.

> "Narrative pastoral therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centers people as the experts in their own lives. It views problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives." –Morgan 2000:2

From the perspective of narrative pastoral therapy, problems only survive when they are supported and backed by particular ideas, beliefs and principles. Narrative therapists are interested in discovering, acknowledging, and "taking apart" or de-constructing the beliefs and practices of the context and broader culture in which a person lives, which serve to assist the problem story (Morgan 2000:45). In imitation of deconstructive philosophers, who maintain that reality as a whole does not contain an objective meaning[2], transformative narrative therapy requires the re-authoring of one's life story.

Donald Capps, Professor in Pastoral Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, referred to this process as reframing: "…changing the frame in which a person perceives events in order to change the meaning. When the meaning changes, the person's responses and behaviours also change…. When a therapist tries to get a client to 'think about things differently' or 'see a new point of view' or 'take other factors into consideration', these are attempts to reframe events in order to get the client to respond differently to them" (1990:10–11).

Capps also pointed out that an attitude of hope can be cultivated *inter alia* by the reframing of time, in other words through taking a future perspective on a current problem, and giving a new meaning to the past in the light of present attitudes and intentions for the future. In other words, hope can be cultivated by crossing limits or boundaries of time.

An important tenet of narrative pastoral therapy is that a counselee needs to be separated from his/her problems. In order to address a problem, the problem should be externalised, that is, placed outside a person, and re-named. In doing this, opportunities are created for the rediscovering of knowledge and skills that the person has, but which were overlooked in the face of the often overwhelming pressures of the problem-saturated story. Externalising conversations facilitate the re-naming of the problem-saturated story that dominates a person's life. By focussing on the more hopeful and positive parts of their lives, new meanings are shaped and new life options become available to people.

Narrative pastoral therapy opens doors to a respectful, non-blaming and non-directive approach to counselling. It de-centres the pastor or counsellor, and centres counselees, and allows them to be the experts in their own lives. The postmodern

narrative pastoral counsellor doesn't have the authority to give advice or instructions in a direct way. The counsellor has to make sense of a counselee's grief or trauma and this can be achieved when the counsellor is an interpreter of stories.

3 Revisiting the Consolation Literature of the Early Church Fathers from a Traditional Perspective

Pastoral care in a traditional Christian context and according to the biblical notion of shepherding was concerned with every aspect of human life and healing of the total person: body, mind and spirit. The historical model of pastoral care emphasised pastoral care as the ministry of the whole community of faith, with the pastor being the representative of God. It also emphasised the centrality of a distinctively theological understanding of human beings and their needs, and the grounding of personal growth in Christian spirituality, based upon the historic resources of the Christian faith: the Bible, the sacraments, fellowship, worship and prayer. Pastoral care in the early church always connected the *Story of God* and his redemption in and through Jesus Christ with the actual life- and trauma stories of people.

The letters of consolation in particular reveal a number of facets of the practice of pastoral care at the time. These letters were not only written because the recipients lived at some distance, but in many cases were written with a larger "audience" in view. Letter writing also assisted the sender/author to gather and express his thoughts in an organised manner (cf. Volz 1990:161).

3.1 The Role of the Pastor or Counsellor

The requirements for, and role and duties of a pastor or counsellor doing pastoral care in the early church, were clearly set out and elaborately discussed by the church fathers themselves.

- A major portion of the third century *Didascalia Apostolorum* is a treatise on the office and pastoral functions of the bishop. It contains four analogies by which to understand the character and duty of the bishop with regard to his role as pastoral care-giver. The bishop is to be a judge (as God is a judge), parent, shepherd and physician – thus giving content to the four functions of pastoral care, namely guiding, sustaining, reconciling and healing.
- Ambrose, bishop of Milan, wrote *On the Office of Ministry*[3], based on Cicero's moral instructions, in which he explained that "office" should be understood as "duties" and in which he found biblical support for the four classical virtues of wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Although this work does not relate directly to the practice of pastoral care, it offers an ideal of accepted Christian morality (Volz 1990:144–5).

- In his theological treatise, *Oration II: In defence of his flight to Pontus, and his return, after his ordination to the priesthood, with an exposition of the character of the priestly office*,[4] Gregory of Nazianzus advocated the processes of being moulded and moulding others by Holy Scripture. In the treatise he explains the duties and responsibilities of the pastor. He refers to the task of guiding others into Christian virtue as "the art of arts and the science of sciences" and views the pastor as a "physician of souls" who has to treat a sickness found within the hidden man (cf. Oden 1986:215; Volz 1990:142; Johnson 2007:53). It is important to notice that Gregory of Nazianzus inserted a section on the doctrine of the Trinity in the middle of his treatise on pastoral care (cf. Purves 2001:4, 9–32), and that he was reluctant at first to accept his appointment to the priesthood because of the responsibilities that it entailed (cf. Neville 1984:10–14).
- John Chrysostom, the fourth-century Bishop of Constantinople, considered the finest preacher of the early church, wrote *Six Books on the Priesthood* (*De Sacerdotio*), a rhetorical dialogue in which he also compared the pastor's role to that of a physician. It was written first of all to instruct the church on the reform of the practice of pastoral ministry by spelling out the importance, responsibilities and difficulties of the pastoral office (cf. Volz 1990:141; Purves 2001:42–54; Krupp 1991). John Chrysostom too went to great lengths to try to avoid ordination (Purves 2001:4; Neville 1984:25–28).
- In his *On Christian Doctrine*[5], especially Book 4, Augustine revealed his profound grasp of the pastoral task (cf. Oden 1986:198).
- Gregory the Great wrote his *Book of Pastoral Rule*[6] for the circumstances of his contemporary world. In it he set out the parameters of pastoral care: apart from the bishop's ministry of oversight and teaching, he should also be concerned for the welfare of his flock. This work turned out to be the most influential treatise on pastoral care in the Christian tradition (cf. Oden 1984:12–15, 43–119). This work is however not discussed in the detail and with the attention it deserves, because it falls outside the scope of this article.

In addition to a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and an exemplary conduct, the early church fathers emphasised various and specific skills and qualifications required of pastoral caregivers. For example, they have to refrain from all anger and any form of partiality[7]; Jerome and Ambrose warned the counsellor against breaking the rule of confidentiality[8]; Chrysostom cautioned against abuse of authority[9] and Gregory of Nazianzus emphasised the responsibility of the pastor to set the right example[10].

In summary, the early Christian authors were very much aware of some of the basic principles such as empathy[11], an awareness that surface symptoms may reveal deeper problems and maladies, the need for wisdom and discretion, the dangers of abusing a relationship of trust, confidence and dependence (cf. Volz 1990:145), and the importance of the qualities of patience, perseverance and persuasion, without dragging by force or

constraining by fear (cf. Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood* 2.4; Gerkin 1997:31). It is also important to notice that the early Christian pastoral counsellors mostly fulfilled their pastoral functions, even consolation, from a position of authority. Their consolations were often prescriptive, as seen in Ambrose's *Letter* 39 to Faustinus, and sometimes even domineering (especially to the postmodern ear), as seen in Jerome's rebuke[12] of Paula in his *Letter* 39, concerning the death of her daughter Blesilla only three months after her conversion, and Saint Augustine's reprimand of the widower Cornelius in *Letter* 259:

> "I wish, brother Cornelius, to be kind, but in the midst of such great perils to you and me I do not wish to seem remiss! A horde of women lie down beside you, the number of your concubines increases daily…. You want me to console you on the death of your good wife, but who is to console me on your more real death? ... Why do you keep on sinning by putting off your conversion from day to day when you do not know your own last day?"[13]

3.2 The Role of the Bible in Early Christian Counselling and Consolation

The early Christian authors were so saturated in Scripture that their practical care was interspersed with biblical references, quotations, illustrations and *exempla*. Their practice of pastoral care had been developed from and controlled by their reading and study of the Bible.

Their belief in and emphasis on the healing power and function of the Bible is evident in their writings and consolations[14]. In his *Six Books on the Priesthood* John Chrysostom referred to the Bible[15] as the main healing instrument of the pastor-physician. Augustine wrote of the great benefits derived from reading the Bible and in his *Confessions* he referred to his own conversion as a testimony of the power of Scripture to change lives[16].

3.3 Hope

The early authors cultivated an attitude of hope through the reframing of time (cf. Capps 1995:163ff.), by reminding a troubled person of God's fulfilment of His promises, not only in His Salvation plan, but also in His caring for human beings in the past (as we can see in all the *exempla* used in the different *consolations*), and by giving the person a future vision of an eternity spent with God in heaven. Hope was cultivated through crossing time limits and boundaries. The early Christian authors in particular expounded Christian beliefs concerning life beyond death, in their efforts to strengthen faith and to provide hope amidst affliction.

St. Cyprian wrote in *Mortality,* 20, 22:

"*... that I should preach publicly that our brethren who have been freed from the world by the summons of the Lord should not be mourned, since we know that they are not lost but sent before; that in departing they lead the way; ... and no occasion should be given to the pagans to censure us deservedly and justly, on the ground that we grieve for those who we say are living with God. ... It profits nothing to show forth virtue in words and destroy truth in deeds ... we pass by death to immortality, nor can eternal life succeed unless it has befallen us to depart from here. This is not an end, but a passage and, the journey of time being traversed, a crossing over to eternity*."[17]

3.4 The Sustaining Function

During these early centuries of the Christian tradition, the pastoral sustaining function took form in a fourfold task of helping persons troubled by an overwhelming sense of loss (Clebsch & Jaekle 1975:42–48). The first task of preservation sought to maintain a troubled person's situation with as little loss as possible, or to help a person to hold the line against other threats, or further loss, or excessive retreat (Clebsch & Jaekle 1975:43–44)[18]. The second task of this function of sustaining offered the consolation that actual losses could not nullify a person's opportunity to achieve his/her destiny under God[19]. Consolation served by helping to relieve a disconsolate person from his/her sense of misery, even while acknowledging that the damaging or robbing experience that initiated disconsolation remained irreparable in and of itself, e.g. death.

Seen in historic perspective, pastoral consolation served to relieve one's sense of misery by bringing the sufferer into an understanding of his/her still belonging to the company of hopeful living[20]. The third task, consolidation of the remaining resources available to the sufferer, built a platform from which to face up to a deprived life, despite the loss. In this act suffering was put into perspective within the totality of living, and the deprived person was encouraged to gather him-/herself together again. A pastor's sustaining ministry was aimed at helping the troubled person to select out of a seeming totality of loss and trauma some foundation for reconstruction of and new meaning to life. The actual loss could be seen for what it was, a partial loss (Clebsch & Jaekle 1975:47). Through the fourth act of redemption the troubled person was encouraged to embrace the loss and set out to achieve whatever historical fulfilment might be gained from life in the face of irretrievable deprivation.[21]

4 Points of Contact and Differences between the Early Christian *Consolations* and Postmodern Narrative Therapy

Even though the early Christian *Consolations* focused on in this study are written documents, while postmodern narrative therapy takes place in the context of one-on-one conversations between a counsellor and a counselee(s), interesting and remarkable points of contact – but also important differences – can be identified, within the frame of reference as set out earlier.

4.1 Jerome's *Letter* 60

In *Letter* 60 addressed to Heliodorus, Jerome displayed a sensitive understanding of the psychology of bereavement. In his effort to lessen Heliodorus' grief he suggested other reflections on the tragic situation and on the advantages gained by the late Nepotianus through his early death. In this way Jerome was re-telling (as it were) the tragic story and reframing its meaning so that Heliodorus could think about it differently. The reflections that death is inevitable (*Epist.* 60:5.1; 14.3), that one should prepare for future trauma (5.1), and that Nepotianus has escaped from a world in a state of collapse to another, better world (15.1; 17.1)[22], are all aimed at consoling the bereaved through the comfort of words. By employing pagan *exempla* and topics, which are in a way also examples of "alternative stories", Jerome has reinforced fundamental Christian consolation with pagan ideas and materials (Scourfield 1993:32). In this way he crossed certain boundaries and came to terms with the acceptability of classical (pagan) literature for a Christian author (Scourfield 1993:12, 23, 31).

Jerome: *Letter* 60 (14.6, 15.1, 16.3, 17.1, 19.2, 3):

> "*Overcome to the best of your ability ... the softness of your heart, and suppress those freely flowing tears, or your great love for your nephew will be construed by unbelieving minds as despair of God. You must miss him as one that is absent, not dead, so that you may appear to be waiting to see him again, not to have lost him completely.... Why do I not rather recount for you the recent misfortunes of kings and the disasters of our time, considering that Nepotianus is not so much to be mourned for having been deprived of the light of this world as congratulated for having escaped from such great evils? ... [G]rief and lamentation are everywhere, and the image of death in its many forms. The Roman world is collapsing.... Happy is Nepotianus, who neither sees nor hears these things. We are the wretched ones, who either suffer the torments ourselves, or else see our brothers suffering them. ... [Love] always lives in the heart; through it, our Nepotianus, though absent, is present, and grasps us, separated as we are by such vast tracts of the earth, with either hand. In him we have a guarantee of our love for each other. ... Though we cannot have him in the flesh, let us keep him in our memory, and though we cannot speak with him, let us never cease to speak about him*."[23]

The encomiastic part in *Letter* 60 (chapters 8–12) shows resemblance to funeral orations. Nepotianus is praised for having displayed Christian virtues.[24] This serves as an example of the inherent therapeutic value of narrative – in this case the story of praise painting a character-portrait of the deceased Nepotianus, and a vivid description of his death. The latter is done to encourage the bereaved *consolandus* by reminding him with what fortitude and confidence the deceased had faced death.[25] In this process the bereaved is encouraged to discover key points of meaning and to cross the boundary between hopelessness and hope.

4.2 John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom's most useful contribution to pastoral counselling, seen from a postmodern perspective, is in the first place his description of the role of the pastor

as counsellor. In his *Six Books on the Priesthood* he warned against a counsellor making hurried diagnoses based solely on his/her own observation, without taking into consideration the counselee's self-understanding. He emphasised an un-authoritarian relationship between counsellor and counselee and the notion of choice on the side of the counselee.

John Chrysostom: *Six Books on the Priesthood* II.3:

> "*How, then, can anyone provide the specific for a disease if he does not know its character and often cannot tell whether the man is ill at all? ... You cannot treat men with the same authority with which the shepherd treats a sheep ... [we] are helpers of your joy.... It is necessary to make a man better not by force but by persuasion ... since God gives the crown to those who are kept from evil, not by force, but by choice*."[26]

In an article published in 2001 Professor Christina Landman argued that this is "John Chrysostom's unique contribution to the counsellor-counselee relationship of his time"

Secondly, John Chrysostom placed the consoling and revitalising (true) word in the centre of pastoral activity[27] when he guided a young widow (in his *Letter to a Young Widow*, written around 380 AD) towards re-languaging her sorrow and re-telling her life story. He encouraged her to rename herself by filling the title of "widow" with a new content and by changing it into a title of honour. Chrysostom exhibited remarkable sensitivity and empathy in his *Letter to a Young Widow*:

> "*... I abstained from troubling you when your sorrow was at its height, and the thunderbolt had only just fallen upon you; but having waited an interval, and permitted you to take your fill of mourning, now that you are able to look out a little through the mist, and to open your ears to those who attempt to comfort you ... I offer you some contributions of my own. While the tempest is still severe, a full gale of sorrow is blowing, he who exhorts another to desist from grief would only provoke him to increased lamentation. But when the troubled water has begun to subside, and the fury of the waves is abated, one can spread the sails of conversation*."...
>
> "*But lest the continual repetition of this name of widow should upset thy soul, and disconcert thy reason, having been inflicted on thee in the very flower of thy age, I wish first of all to discourse on this point, and to prove to you that this name of widow is not a title of calamity but of honour, aye the greatest honour*." ...
>
> "*For as an unfortified city lies exposed to all who wish to plunder it, so a young woman living in widowhood has many who form designs upon her on every side, not only those who aim at getting her money but also those who are bent upon corrupting her modesty.*"
>
> "*… he has only sailed into the tranquil haven, … For this death is not death, but only a kind of emigration and translation from the worse to the better, from earth to heaven*, …"
>
> " *... as long as you lived with the blessed Therasius you enjoyed honour and consideration such as is natural for a wife to receive from a husband; but now in his place you have God who is the Lord of all, who hath of old been thy protector and will be so now still more and with yet greater earnestness; ... He hath displayed no slight token of his providential care by having preserved thee whole and unharmed in the midst of such a furnace of anxiety and sorrow*, ..."

> "*For now we are confident that by the grace of God he has taken his flight to the region of rest, because he had not committed himself to any of those deeds which exclude from the kingdom of Heaven; but in that case after long contact with public business, he might probably have contracted great defilement. ... But, as it is, we have been relieved from this apprehension, and we are firmly persuaded that in the great day he will appear in much radiance, shining forth near the King, and going with the angels in advance of Christ ... and standing by the side of the King as he gives judgment ...*"[28]

He also seemed to empower the young widow to take control over her money and body, to refrain from engaging in a second marriage for the wrong reasons and to make the right choices which could ultimately lead to her own healing and well-being. Chrysostom encouraged the widow to deposit her earthly possessions in heaven, where it will be save from those who have designs upon it and where it will yield much profit. In this way he, as it were, deconstructed the practices of the broader culture in which she lived that were serving to assist the problem-story. He urged her towards another response and choice and assisted the young widow in a deconstruction of her current situation by proving that, what initially seemed to be a great loss, could actually be turned into a beneficent gain.

He guided her to an alternative story by picturing the possibility that God had prepared for her a destiny in heaven to be attained by a chaste and obedient life as a widow (cf. Clebsch & Jaekle 1975:123). Furthermore, by remaining a widow she would retain her independence, while by remarriage she would place herself again in the *potestas* of a husband who would have full control of her life.

When Chrysostom mentioned that nine emperors died unnatural deaths in the time when her late husband had climbed the political ladder, he suggested that Therasius had done well for himself and his widow to die before reaching a higher position, where a similar terrible fate could await both of them (cf. Scourfield 1993:197). Once again he guided her to an alternative story. This is an example of eductive guidance, which emphasises the counsellor's "educing" or drawing out of the counselee's inner sense of direction and decision-making capabilities. The widow is also instructed that women who have lost their husbands are wedded to Christ: in place of Therasius, she has God. Chrysostom also encouraged the young widow to not think about her deceased husband as if he had altogether perished. She should think about him as someone who is not dead, but in a better place[29]. She is encouraged to rather say "hullo" to him. This is an example of a therapeutic process or method through which a bereaved person is assisted in repositioning him-/herself in relation to the death of a loved one (White 1998). Although the bereaved person has much to say goodbye to (for example the material reality, hopes and expectations), the "saying hullo" metaphor helps a person in mourning to arrive at a new relationship with him-/herself, especially in the case of a person experiencing "delayed grief" or "pathological mourning".

4.3 Ambrose of Milan

In his first book *On the decease of his brother Satyrus*, St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, did more or less the same when he said (1.14):

> "*… that I might follow in affection him departing, and embrace in mind him whom I see with my eyes. For it gives me pleasure to fix the whole gaze of my eyes on him, to encompass him with kindly endearments*; …"[30]

In his two books *On the decease of his brother Satyrus* Ambrose situates his feelings of grief within his Christian belief concerning an afterlife, as derived from the *Story of God*. He draws on the Scriptures to support his teaching that death is not the end of human nature, but the conclusion of life in this world.

4 Conclusion

To a great extent the early church fathers in their *Consolations* did exactly that what is required of postmodern narrative pastoral counsellors, albeit through written documents. They reached out to those who had suffered loss, at the point of their need, and sought to enter into that experience of loss in order to achieve understanding. They also participated in the deconstruction of the problem-saturated story and the envisaging of a new alternative story – a story that was always in some way "connected" to a larger story, to *God's Story*. In offering consolation the early church fathers utilised themes common to humanity, but always with reference to Christ's resurrection, his conquest of death, and the hope of eternal life.

It is clear from the study of these representative consolations that biblically-based pastoral care and counselling can deliver significant positive outcomes for counselling the bereaved, even in post-modern times.

There are substantial reasons for this:

- The counselling practice is informed by a clear theoretical and theological framework – the gospel still is a valid and relevant meta-narrative. Without this meta-narrative there is no hope.
- The narrative model practiced by the early church fathers shows that the *Story of God* can change and give new meaning to a human story. A bereaved person's story, for example, is changed through *God's Story* in so far as it is guided into a new direction and when it acquires a new purpose.
- In a culture where people are aware of and open to spiritual realities (in spite of an experience of rootlessness and fragmentation), there is a growing awareness of the advantages of employing story and spiritual direction. We can still make sense of life from a perspective of religious conviction.

Therefore, in view of the examples set by St. Jerome and John Chrysostom in their relevant letters, I fully support the orthodox postmodern theologians' point of view. A Christian counsellor can appropriate *God's Story*, and the dimensions thereof that support the deconstruction of the problem-saturated story, to empower a person suffering from trauma, to become a fulfilled, responsible and hopeful participant in life (cf. Wimberley 1994:17–32; Benson 2002:8).

It is quite significant that the theme of the *6th African Congress on Pastoral Care and Counselling* of the *African Association for Pastoral Studies and Counselling* (AAPSC), held in Stellenbosch in September 2009, was:

> Cura Vitae – the care for and healing of life.

And in this regard, Daniel Louw (2008:11), Professor in Pastoral Theology, Pastoral Care and Counselling at Stellenbosch and author of the book *Cura Vitae: Illness and healing of life in pastoral care and counselling*, states:

> Cura Vitae is about the question how the perspective of the resurrection in Christ, and the indwelling presence of the Spirit, can contribute to the empowerment of human beings; it is about hope and care and the endeavour how to give meaning to life within the reality of suffering, our human vulnerability, and the ever existing predicament of trauma, illness and sickness.

NOTES

1 "To heal does not primarily mean to take pains away but to reveal that our pains are part of a greater pain, that our sorrows are part of a greater sorrow, that our experience is part of the greater experience of him who said, 'But was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into the glory of God?' (cf. Luke 24:26)." See also Patton 1993:35–36.

2 Deconstructive philosophers are Jacques Derridá and Michael Foucault.

3 *De Officiis Ministrorum*, (*NPNF*[2] 10:1–91)

4 *De Fuga* (AD 362)

5 *De Doctrina Christiana* 396 (*NPNF*[1] 2)

6 *Regula Pastoralis or Pastoralis Cura* (*NPNF*[2] 12)

7 Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood* 3:12–13; 6:4

8 Jerome, *Letter* 52.14–15; Ambrose, *On the Office of Ministry* 1.3.13

9 *On the Priesthood* 2.2

10 *Oration* 2.71

11 See, for example, Jerome in his *Letters* 39 and 60. Jerome begins his *Letter* 39 by expressing his own deep feeling of sadness and describes how his entire letter to Paula is written in his own tears.

12 Jerome reminds Paula that Christians must show restraint in their grief, thus reflecting a Stoic belief from the pagan world.

13 Augustine, Letter 259, in *Saint Augustine: Letters*, vol. 5 (trans. W. Parsons; New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1956).

"When the pastor performs his function as a counselor, his faith is becoming active in love. Here proclamation and therapy support one another in a total ministry of witness and mission. The love of God to which he witnesses in preaching is recapitulated in an analogous fashion in the empathy of counseling" (Oden 1966:26); cf. Jerome's letter to Heliodorus on the death of Nepotianus (*Letter* 60) and Chrysostom's *Letter to a Young Widow*.

14 *Letter* 137.18: "By these means wayward minds are corrected, weak minds are nourished, and strong minds are filled with pleasure, in such a way as is profitable to all. This doctrine has no enemy, but the man who, being in error, is ignorant of its incomparable usefulness, or being spiritually diseased, is averse to its healing power."

15 *Conf*. 7.20–21 and 8.8–12

16 See *The Fathers of the Church* (trans. Roy J Deferrari; New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958).

17 Cf. in this regard John Chrysostom's *Letter to a Young Widow*, and Ambrose's letter to Faustinus (*Epist*. 39)

18 as in John Chrysostom's *Letter to a Young Widow*

19 Cf. Cyprian's *Epistle LV* addressed to the Christian martyrs in Thibaris

20 Once again, Chrysostom's *Letter to a Young Widow* is a fine example of these latter two tasks.

21 Cf. also Cyprian, *Mort*. 22; Ambrose, *Ob. Val*. 46; Jerome, *Epist*. 39.3.6; Augustine, *Serm*. 172.3; Ambrose, *On the decease of his brother Satyrus*, Book 1, chapters 30–33.

22 See J. H. D. Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus – A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

23 To emphasise the virtues of the deceased is to reinforce the fact that he is now in heaven (Scourfield 1993:29 n. 129). Augustine was also explicit about this in his *Epist*. 259.1 addressed to Cornelius, where the latter desired to be comforted by hearing the praises of his dead wife.

24 Cf. also *Epist*. 127.14; *Epist*. 108.27–8

25 Translated by Graham Neville (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).

26 See *On the Priesthood* IV.2.

27 *NPNF*[1] 9 (trans. W. R. W. Stephens, ed. Philip Schaff; New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889).

28 "*… he has only sailed into the tranquil haven, … For this death is not death, but only a kind of emigration and translation from the worse to the better, from earth to heaven*, … (in Clebsch & Jaekle 1975:127)

29 See: *On Christian dying. Classic and contemporary texts* (ed. Matthew Levering; Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004).

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VILIFICATION OF THE RICH IN JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S HOMILY 40 *ON FIRST CORINTHIANS*

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate how and why John Chrysostom vilifies wealthy people in his fortieth homily *On First Corinthians*. The essay takes into account the composition of Chrysostom's audience, since it may have direct relevance for his vilification of the rich. Furthermore, an important feature of wealth/poverty studies in late antiquity, namely the move from civic euergetism to an economic model of benefaction, is explained. Thereafter Chrysostom's methods of vilification are discussed, including his use of the apostle Paul as the agent of vilification, the recognition of the limited good economic perception and Chrysostom's use of vice-accusations toward the rich. The study is concluded by examining why Chrysostom antagonises wealthy individuals.

1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate how and why John Chrysostom vilifies wealthy people in his fortieth homily on First Corinthians. Only one homily is selected as a proof-case to examine this phenomenon on a rather high level of abstraction. This study does not attempt to provide an exhaustive listing and discussion of references to the vilification of the rich, which would be impossible since they are so numerous especially in Chrysostomian homilies. Rather, only one homily is taken as a test-case to experiment with, namely homily 40 *On First Corinthians*. Why this homily? At first glance it would appear that this feature is not very prominent in the homily. Its exegetical scope is 1 Corinthians 15:29–34, thus discussing the resurrection. It is remarkable however that even with such a theological theme, the motif of wealth and poverty appears extensively, often explicit but also implicit in the argument. It becomes an exercise in reading between and behind the lines of the homily to discover what the homilist is attempting

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to illustrate to his audience, and to identify ideological presuppositions present within his frame of reference. As with most of Chrysostom's homilies, the conclusion often diverges into moral exhortations especially with regard to wealth and poverty, and the homily under discussion is no exception. It moves from a sophisticated and focused discussion of a key theological motif, the resurrection, to an impassioned moral treatise on the villainy of wealth.

The first section of the paper will look at the composition of Chrysostom's audience, since it may have direct relevance for his vilification of the rich. Thereafter an important feature of wealth/poverty studies in late antiquity, namely the move from civic euergetism to an economic model of benefaction, will be explained. Then Chrysostom's methods of vilification will be discussed and the study will be concluded by looking at Chrysostom's reasons for antagonising those with excessive wealth.

2 The Significance of Chrysostom's Audience

To study the composition of Chrysostom's audience is an interesting excursus indeed, since most of Chrysostom's audience appear to have been very wealthy individuals. This thesis has especially been developed through the work of Ramsey MacMullen (1989; 2009) who argues that Chrysostom's audience consisted of people mostly originating from the upper echelons of society and were also generally males. MacMullen (1989:504–505) illustrates that it is not difficult to come to this conclusion, since most of the hearers of his sermons probably received an expensive education by being able to enjoy rhetorically sophisticated sermons and, most obviously, mention is made of the rich by Chrysostom himself in the sermons. Mayer (2000:73–87) has critiqued MacMullen's view in a more nuanced and detailed article by stating (2000:76):

> The question that MacMullen fails to ask is whether this preoccupation simply reflects the importance of such people in society and within the church and can therefore be attributed to a natural focus upon them, or whether it is indicative of a genuine numerical dominance on their part.

The question is valid and Mayer has proven that the issue of the audience of John Chrysostom is more complex than it may appear. With regard to his activity in Antioch where the homilies *On First Corinthians* were preached, it seems as if John had to preach in different churches to different congregations (Van de Paverd 1970:61–79; cf. Mayer 2000:79) rather than having one audience following him around (Wilken 1983:13). Mayer does have to concede that the references to the wealthy are so numerous that they call for attention (Mayer 2000:81). In a different, more recent article, Mayer (2008:147–148) indicates how complex the semantic domain of "the poor" in late ancient society was; it was not a monolithic concept (cf. Mayer 2006:474–475). Despite the critique, MacMullen does give important attention to the wealthy individuals in Chrysostom's audience and in most of the homilies the one constant indicator is the references to the wealthy. In MacMullen's most recent work, a book entitled *The second church* (2009),

he convincingly shows that the churches in which popular preachers like Chrysostom preached were often only able to cater for about 1 or 2 percent of the population. On certain days, like Wednesdays and Fridays, when there were services held in Antioch, the working class were absent since they had to labour (Mayer 2000:78). The lower- and middle-class citizens' liturgical space was more centred on the household than the official churches (except on feast days and other important gatherings). In some occasions, Chrysostom himself refers to the household as a "little church".

The presence and social (and possibly numerical) dominance of the wealthy in Chrysostom's services become hard to ignore. It is exactly these references to the rich that this study is concerned with. Many of the scholars mentioned above and others have been especially concerned about the numerical representation of various social groups in the audiences. This study aims to go further and ask what the effect of the preacher's rhetoric may have been on the various segments of the audience, specifically Chrysostom's vilification of the wealthy.

But perhaps this question of audience composition and social influence is not the only question that needs to be asked. Although homilies are useful for reconstructing social history, it must also be remembered that they are propagandistic (Hunter 1989:119–138) and indicative of what Brown (2002:7) calls a new language of "social imagination". The references to the rich and the poor not only give us clues to the audience composition, but more importantly, they are indicative of rhetorical constructs of "rich" and "poor" in late ancient Christianity. Perhaps using these references so diligently to speculate on audience composition is to a certain extent even missing the point. What is significant is how the rich and the poor are portrayed and what the function of this is. The rest of the study will elaborate on this aspect.

3 From Civic Euergetism to an Economic Model of Benefaction

Scholars in the field of wealth/ poverty studies in the late empire have come to realise that the social elites of this period were in the middle of a transition from a civic model of euergetism to a more economic model that highlighted and polarised the rich and the poor. The monumental work of Evelyne Patlagean entitled *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance: 4–7e siècles* (1977) is definitive of this shift between traditional classical society and late ancient society. Although the social elites of Chrysostom's time probably still had civic ideals of benefaction in mind, Chrysostom can be seen as one of the most influential advocates of a change of social imagination and social rhetoric in the latter part of the fourth century. It is especially visible in his homilies. Grig (2006:161) explains it in a more simple fashion: "In late antiquity the 'haves' were told by their preachers, probably for the first time, that they had a duty to the 'have-nots'..."

Chrysostom's homilies exhibit a potent polarisation of rich and poor. His contrasts of the poor and the rich are extreme in nature. Even though Chrysostom probably had the voluntary poor in mind as ascetic ideals of wealth management, as Mayer (2008:142–149) has shown, he prefers to use examples from the structurally poor to stir up a *pathos* in his audience. In homily 11 *On First Corinthians*, Chrysostom draws a stark contrast between the rich, whom he is addressing, and the poor "out there" (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 11.10 [*NPNF*]; MPG 61.94.48–95.8):

> For how is he to sleep after all, with pangs of the belly, restless famine besetting him and that often while it is freezing, and the rain coming down on him? And while you, having washed, return home from the bath, in a glow with soft raiment, merry of heart and rejoicing, and hastening to a banquet prepared and costly: he, driven everywhere about the market place by cold and hunger, takes his round, stooping low and stretching out his hands; nor has he even spirit without trembling to make his suit for his necessary food to one so full fed and so bent on taking his ease; no, often he has to retire with insult. When therefore you have returned home, when you lie down on your couch, when the lights round your house shine bright, when the table is prepared and plentiful, at that time call to remembrance that poor miserable man wandering about, like the dogs in the alleys, in darkness and in mire; except indeed when, as is often the case, he has to depart from there, not to a house, nor wife, nor bed, but unto a pallet of straw; even as we see the dogs baying all through the night. And you, if you see but a little drop falling from the roof, throw the whole house into confusion, calling your slaves and disturbing everything: while he, laid in rags, and straw, and dirt, has to bear all the cold.

The references to the extravagantly rich and hopelessly poor are rhetorical strategies that perpetuate the polarisation between rich and poor. Brown (2002:46) is correct in noting that these polarities were rather extreme cases of hyperbole. Himmelfarb's (1973:2:726) caveat regarding Christian rhetoric is helpful in this instance: "[It] had the conceptual effect of pauperizing the poor by first creating the most distinctive, dramatic image of the lowest class, and then imposing that image upon the lower classes as a whole." This rhetorical enterprise is directed at both the rich and the poor. Not only does Chrysostom provide social constructs of the poor in his rhetoric, but he also constructs an image of the rich. This new social imagination allows for the rich to easily fall into vice when they forget the poor. Using Brown's (2002:5) terms, the rich person must become a *philoptôchos* rather than a *philopatris*. This illustrates the shift from the virtue of civic benefaction to that of becoming a "lover of the poor". Chrysostom is subtle in his language. In many instances he still prefers to use the language of civic euergetism (Robert 1960:569–572), but his social ideology remains representative of the shift away from it. The danger of civic euergetism is that the philanthropy that results from it often results in the vice of *kenodoxia*, that is, vain-glory (Constantelos 2008:194). The problem is therefore one of constructing a strategic social self-mage.

This study is exactly concerned with this social construction of the wealthy individual. For the purposes of this study, these constructs may be referred to as stereotypes. From a social psychological perspective, stereotypes are perceptions of groups in a society

(McGarthy, Yzerbyt & Spears 2002:1). One of the principles for creating stereotypes is that they represent shared group beliefs (*op. cit*., 5–7). The group in this instance is late ancient Christians, in particular, Christians living in the eastern empire. As one of their spokesmen, Chrysostom creates a stereotype of the rich as a means of social control. This stereotype is constructed and then vilified in order to promote action on the part of the rich. The rhetorical function is that it calls for a response from the rich not to fit the stereotype. It would also spur on those that Brown (2002:25) calls the "middling" classes to avoid becoming the stereotype. The process of vilification of the rich stereotype would do even more to repel anyone who would resemble it. There may be a striking difference between the representation of the rich, and the reality of their identity, but Chrysostom is not concerned with this. He is concerned with a discourse that is directly linked with the task of the church, that is, to care for the poor. This type of Christian rhetoric is not concerned with presenting the "facts" as they are, but re-presenting a social scenario that would call people to action and, to a larger extent, perpetuate a shift against the civic virtue of benefaction towards the direct giving to the church in service of the poor. Just as the rich themselves have been concerned with social self-image by engraving their names and associated patronage on various civic *topoi*, the homily becomes a public *topos* where the display of social image also takes place, but is then regulated by the bishop or priest preaching the message. The social power and influence of the public homily should not be underestimated. It can be especially seen in the homilies of Chrysostom *On the statues* and his homily *On Eutropius* (Hunter 1989:124–127). Chrysostom's homilies, which become social-power catalysts, vilify the image of the wealthy. The next question is how this takes place, specifically in homily 40 *On First Corinthians*, our case-study.

4 How Does John Chrysostom Vilify the Rich?

Vilification as a rhetorical device is known in Greek literature as ψογός (blame). It implies the defamation of one's opponent (Knust 2005:25–31) and is part of the epideictic branch of rhetoric. This epideictic rhetoric is a commonplace in ancient documents (Du Toit 1994:403–412) and especially visible in Chrysostom's homilies. The next sections highlight the ways in which Chrysostom vilifies the rich.

4.1 Paul as Agent of Vilification

Chrysostom's method of vilification functions on several different levels. The first important feature is that Chrysostom sets up Paul the apostle as the agent of vilification. This is evident from the hermeneutics assumed in Chrysostomian homilies, what Margaret Mitchell (2000:1) calls a hermeneutic of resuscitation: "Chrysostom felt an intimate relationship with the dead apostle which virtually brought him to life in the

reading and interpretation of his letters...introducing the Paul whom he knew so well to others." This literary *redivivus* or portraiture, is something that is typically more present in ancient Greek biography, in which living writers exhibit a vivid relationship with the dead (Momigliano 1993:104). By having this type of hermeneutic present in a public sermon, *Paulus redivivus* becomes a co-preacher with Chrysostom; in fact, Chrysostom makes Paul speak as if he is the primary preacher. This is combined throughout most of homily 40 *On First Corinthians* with numerous instances of philosophical diatribes and rhetorical questions, and the homily becomes a conceptual epic of Paul, the hero (cf. Mitchell 2000:13), outwitting his opponents. This venture of portraiture by Chrysostom becomes easy and accessible since the homilies are expositions of scripture. The rhetorical consequence of this is that these homilies not only provide commentary on certain scriptural passages, but they act as "scripts" in the homiletical drama – becoming the *ipsissima verba* of the apostle to the audience. The script will often contain references from many other scriptures along with the section being discussed. In the case of homily 40, one clear example can be stated. The fourth and fifth section of the homily represents the major shift from an exposition on the resurrection to a polemic against excessive wealth. It is done by this carefully planned scripting of verses (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.4–5 [*NPNF*]; MPG 61.351.36–352.20):

> Awake up righteously and *sin* not. As if he were speaking to drunkards and madmen. For suddenly to cast everything out of their hands, was the part of drunkards and madmen, in not seeing any longer what they saw nor believing what they had before confessed. But what is, righteously? With a view to what is profitable and useful. For it is possible to awaken unrighteously, when a person is thoroughly roused up to the injury of his own *soul*. And well did he add, *sin* not, implying that because of this were the *sins* of their unbelief. And in many places he covertly signifies this, that a corrupt life is the parent of *evil* doctrines; as when he says, 'The *love of money* is a root of all kinds of *evil*, which some reaching after, have been led astray from the *faith*'… But let us not consider these things as spoken to them only, but as addressed now also to all who labor under the same disease, and live a corrupt life. Since in *truth* not they who hold corrupt doctrines only, but they too who are holding grievous *sins*, are both drunken and frantic. Wherefore also to them may it be *justly* said, 'Awake,' and especially to those who are weighed down by the lethargy of *avarice*; who rob wickedly.

Having created a portrait of Paul in his preaching, this portrait speaks in the scripts of the homily. Chrysostom's rhetoric is strategically placed. It has in fact started with his exposition on 1 Corinthians 15:32–33 with the statements of "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" as well as "bad company corrupts good manners". After quoting 15:34 and giving a very brief exposition, he immediately frames 1 Timothy 6:10 between 34a and 34b. The insertion of 1 Timothy 6:10 into the "dialogue" or script he has Paul speak sets the stage for the process of vilification that will follow. Using the references to drunkards and mad persons from 32–33, and the construction above, it becomes easy for Chrysostom to go from madmen and drunkards to those who suffer from the vice of greed (πλεονεξία). This aspect of vice and vilification will be discussed soon in more

detail. Before this can be done, however, Chrysostom's understanding of economics must be viewed.

4.2 Vilification and the Limited Good

An important feature in Chrysostom's thinking is the affirmation of the "limited good" economic perception. This perception, mainly highlighted in anthropological studies, entails that all goods exist in limited amounts and can only be increased or expanded at the expense of others (Malina 2000:89). Chrysostom states (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.5 [*NPNF*]; MPG 61.352.20–31):

> For there is a *robbery* which is *good*, the *robbery* of *heaven*, which does not harm others. And although in respect of money it is impossible for one to become rich, unless another first become poor [author's italics]: yet in spiritual things this is not so, but the reverse: it is impossible that anyone should become rich without making another's store plentiful. For if you help no one, you will not be able to grow *wealthy*. Thus, whereas in temporal things imparting causes diminution: in spiritual things, on the contrary, imparting works increase, and not imparting produces great poverty and brings on extreme punishment.

In this section Chrysostom proposes a way of perceiving economic realities different to that of the typical Mediterranean inhabitant. He concedes to the basic principles of the limited good. The reason someone is rich is because others are poor, the rich have more than their share. This was one of the main reasons for the negative perceptions of the rich in peasant societies (Malina 2000:97–98). Most wealthy individuals had to balance their wealth accumulation and status acquisition aspirations. Chrysostom wants to illustrate to the wealthy that seeking spiritual riches, or the "robbery of heaven", holds more advantages than accumulating wealth. He proposes that there is a higher law than the seemingly logical and obvious rule of the limited good. Spiritual goods increase with diminution, that is, giving away leads to increase. The law does not seem logical, but Chrysostom seeks to prove it by referring to the parable of the servants and talents (Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 19:12–28). By burying his talent (an equivalent to gathering excess wealth), the servant lost everything. By this, Chrysostom establishes a spiritual economy based on almsgiving. Despite the contrary material reality, almsgiving is in fact investment. This investment is in spiritual riches.

Thus, although Chrysostom acknowledges that wealthy people are the reason for the poverty in the city, the rich have a road to redemption – through almsgiving. This principle is the opposite of the limited good principle, but leads to greater, eternal wealth. Acknowledging the limited good perception is part of the vilification of the rich, but he does not merely vilify them, but motivates them to salvation and true wealth via almsgiving. This principle lies at the centre of the new model of economic benefaction (over and against civic euergetism) that Chrysostom, and many others, as Patlagean has

shown, would promote.

4.3 Vilification and Vice-Accusations

Thus, the analysis of the first feature of Chrysostom's vilification, the process of Pauline portraiture and strategic scripting, leads the way to the second feature, namely the prominence of Stoic virtue/vice discourse. In this homily, the vices of gluttony and drunkenness, folly or madness, pride, covetousness, excessiveness and envy feature quite prominently. The connection between the vices of gluttony, drunkenness and greed has a history in Chrysostom's thinking, as Newhauser (2000:43–44) states:

> Chrysostom, unlike Cassian, is generally not systematic in relating avarice to other sins…The authoritative foundation for finding similarities between gluttony or drunkenness and avarice was established in the related statements of Matthew 6:24…and Philippians 3:10…The glutton or drunkard is the slave of his belly, avaricious person of his idolized gold; both suffer from a type of intoxication. Yet the philarguros [his italics] is worse than the glutton, for whereas the latter may recover after a night's sleep, greed always stays with the avaricious sinner, if he can sleep at all.

Newhauser's demonstration confirms with what ease Chrysostom can relate drunkenness and gluttony with greed. These people he vilifies have insatiable appetites, for food and especially wealth (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.4–5). Chrysostom uses the example of the giving of the manna in Exodus 16 to illustrate the danger of the sin of excessiveness. This narrative is quite convenient for this particular use, since the Israelites were grumbling against Moses and Aaron for not having food, and they longed back for the pots of meat of Egypt (Ex. 16:3). Hearing the prayer of Moses, Yahweh provides manna and quail for the Israelites to eat, however the condition stipulated is that they were not allowed to take more than what they needed, and they were not allowed to store the manna (Ex. 16:13–21). Those who took more than they needed and stored it until morning found that the manna was rotten and had maggots on it. Chrysostom transforms the language of this narrative and incorporates it in his vice-accusations. The covetousness of the rich breeds moral rot and worms. All people have, in general at least, the same body with the same necessities. All have one stomach to fill; therefore, by necessity, people have no excuse for excessive drinking and eating and storing of wealth. In fact, those who eat too much have, according to Chrysostom, more to get rid of. The language of filth and excrement is not foreign to Chrysostom's virtue/vice discourse as Leyerle (2009:345–356) has convincingly shown. Especially in homily 13.4 *On First Timothy*, Chrysostom states that the more luxurious a person lives, the more stench and filth he or she accumulates (Leyerle 2009:347). The accumulation and excessive and luxurious squandering of wealth is in fact equal to accumulating moral and spiritual rot and maggots.

Not only with food do people practice excessiveness, but also with slaves (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.6). Chrysostom openly asks the people why they have such "herds of slaves"

to their attendance. It is certainly not an issue of necessity, because people do not need others to serve them (De Wet 2008:4–11). Just as everyone has received one stomach to fill, so too everyone has two hands to attend to their own needs. Once again he makes Paul speak by quoting Acts 20:34: "These hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." It is in fact better to serve others than to be served. The extravagant display of these slaves are actually shameful and a sign of pride. It is shameful since people use slaves, especially in the marketplace, to keep other people at a comfortable distance from their owners. According to Chrysostom, these wealthy slaveholders would rather allow animals like horses to walk close beside them than other people. The morally disgusting action of dehumanising and animalising the inferior people around them (more specifically, the poor people) make these wealthy people shameful and spiritually reprehensible and is, in Chrysostom's words, madness. They are also accused of pride. All the slaves running around them are a sign of their perceived importance and elevated status. The slaves are often clad in the best clothing and jewellery. This was not to the advantage of the slaves themselves, but is indicative of the status and advantage of the owner. Glancy (2006:4) has pointed out that slaves served as surrogate bodies for their owners. A slave who was dressed in such extravagant clothing was merely a fashion accessory to the owner and marked the owner, in Chrysostom's eyes, with pride. Chrysostom also foresees people saying that the slaves are a reason for their accumulation of wealth, since they do not only have to feed themselves, but also the slaves. But once again this is not an excuse. If they did not have all these slaves, they would not need to accumulate so many goods. The owners are in fact worse than slaves, and slaves themselves, for just as slaves carry fasces, this rich person carries pride, which is a much heavier and shameful burden. Chrysostom then directly sets himself up against the public display of wealth and social recognition of patronage. The vainglory or *kenodoxia*, along with selfish motives for *philanthropia*, are only nails in the coffin of the morally rotten rich person. This type of rhetoric against the classical values of patronage/benefaction and *philotimia* (that is, the public display and recognition accompanying the benefaction) affirm Patlagean's (1977:276) and Brown's (2002:10) hypothesis that late antiquity marked a shift from public benefaction to transforming people into, as Brown calls it, "lovers of the poor". As Leyerle (1994:29–32) emphasises, the spectacle of the marketplace, where the rich parade their slaves and treat other human beings like animals or even worse, invoked the same disdain in Chrysostom as the theatre.

Finally, another vice that Chrysostom incorporates in his rhetoric of vilification is envy (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.5). The rich person who flaunts his or her wealth is very much susceptible to be envied by others. In the ancient Mediterranean context, envy was a very dangerous vice. In a society where goods were limited (a view that Chrysostom clearly understood and accepted, as shown above) the "have-nots" are in that position because of the "haves". Chrysostom often incorporates envy in his homilies (De Wet 2007:4–6), not in a superstitious way as is often the case in antiquity, but rather to show

that envy in fact is like a venom against a virtuous lifestyle. The rich person causes envy and therefore works against virtue. This person is also accountable since his or her conduct caused the resultant envy. More important however is that envy works against what Blowers (2010:1–27) calls the emotional culture of compassion in late ancient Christianity. It is related to the fact that the public display of wealth and the dehumanization of the poor in the marketplace goes against the virtue of compassion and pity, the opposite of envy. The rich cause envy among the poor and there is no pity or compassion on their behalf towards those who suffer under poverty. This culture of compassion, along with the Patlagean-Brown socio-economic shift against traditional euergetism, is the hallmark of late ancient Christian virtuosity that Chrysostom aims to instil through his preaching.

5 Conclusion: Why does John Chrysostom Vilify the Rich?

The various methods of Chrysostom's vilification of the rich have been discussed. By setting up the apostle Paul as the agent of vilification, Chrysostom absolves himself as an enemy of the rich. A crisis that John and many others of his contemporaries found was the indifference of the rich. They believed that since they contributed financially to the church, they were not directly accountable to the poor. In a recent study by Sitzler (2009:468–479) identity theory is applied to highlight aspects of the poor and the wealthy. Sitzler (2009:470–472) especially focuses on group-opposites with identity formation. It is concluded in Sitzler's paper that Chrysostom surprisingly groups himself with the rich, who are "visible" and present in the congregation, as opposed to the "invisible" poor who are "out there" in various remote locations (Mayer 2006:477–479).

Chrysostom is therefore not setting himself against the rich. Rather, he is painfully aware of the dilapidating circumstances of the city of Antioch and believes that the crisis results from the indifference of the rich. They are more preoccupied to make themselves "visible", to use Sitzler's terms, or more specifically, establish their status as patrons and power-holders of the city. This display especially happens in the marketplace, theatre and church, which all serve as a stage for displaying wealth, influence and status. Brown (1998:305–322) has convincingly shown that most of Chrysostom's rhetoric is directed against the evil excesses and temptations of the city. With the vilification of the rich, his rhetoric is aimed against the way the rich perceive themselves and how they want others to perceive them in the city. It affirms the shift to an economic model of benefaction (based primarily on spiritual wealth). He vilifies them (and the process of the civic display of patronage) in order to promote almsgiving and to possibly alleviate poverty in the city (which would also make the task of the church easier). The extreme depictions of rich and poor were probably not fully accurate, but the hyperbolic rhetoric is effective to illicit an emotional response.

This leads to the second aspect of why the rich are vilified. While it promotes the new economic model of benefaction, at the same time it nurtures an emotional culture of

compassion (Blowers 2010). These two aspects cannot be separated. The shift to the new economic model can only be effective if there is an emotional outcry toward the poor. Brown (2002:10) speaks of people becoming "lovers" of the poor. This compassion for the poor (and the vilification of the hypothetical "excessively rich person") leads to an emotional-and-economic culture of compassion and sharing, both being congruent products of the new Christian social imagination so characteristic of late antiquity and especially Chrysostom.

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ST. AUGUSTINE AND MEDICAL SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

St. Augustine, one of the most important Latin church fathers was, as educated man, also informed about the natural sciences, including medicine. In his prolific output of 93 major literacy works, he heavily influenced the development of Western Christianity. His publications often included references to matters of medical interest and in his sermons he made use of health care incidents to strengthen his theological arguments. This essay gives an overview of St. Augustine's extensive usage of medical science in his writings.

1 Life History

Aurelius Augustinus was of Berber stock, born in 354 CE in Thagaste (Souk Ahras, Algeria) to a Christian mother, Monica, and pagan father, Patricius. He grew up in a pagan environment and school, learning Latin and rhetoric and enjoying Cicero's *Hortensius*. At the age of 17 he moved to Carthage where he studied rhetoric and philosophy with a special interest in Manichaeism. He lived with a concubine who bore him a son, Adeodatus. In 383 CE he became a teacher in rhetoric in Rome, but through the good offices of the Manichaean, Symmachus, was soon appointed to a senior teaching post (rhetoric and Latin) in Milan. Interestingly enough, he was the only prominent Latin church father who never mastered Greek. Influenced by his pious mother, Monica, and Ambrosius, bishop of Milan, he gradually broke with Manichaeism and took on the Christian religion, being baptised with his son Adeodatus during Passover 387 CE. He broke his 13-year relationship with his concubine and accepted his mother's proposal of an arranged wedding with an eleven-year-old girl. However, Augustine, still being in a state of emotional turmoil, took a new concubine, eventually broke off his arranged engagement and uttered his well known prayer: "God, grant chastity and continence, but not yet" (*Conf*. 8.7.17). His philosophical studies now included Neo-Platonism, but in the course of 388 CE (34 years old) he became convinced of his Christian calling, and decided to return to Africa.

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On his way back (388 CE) his mother died in Ostia, and his son shortly afterwards, which left him with no living relatives. He now sold his patrimony, donating the proceeds to the poor, but kept the family home which he converted into a monastic foundation. In 391 CE he was ordained priest in Hippo Regis (Annaba, Algeria) and became a famous preacher, combating all movements which opposed Catholic Christianity as he saw it, including the Manicheans, Donatists, Pelagians and Arians. In 396 CE he became coadjutor bishop and shortly afterwards full bishop of Hippo. He left his monastery but continued his monastic life in the Episcopal residence, devoting the rest of his life to the study, definition, and teaching of the Christian religion. In 430 CE the Vandals overran Roman North Africa and besieged Hippo where Augustine was in the final stage of his illness. He died on 28 August 430 CE, 76 years old. Shortly afterwards the Vandals raised the siege, but then returned to burn the city. All of Hippo was destroyed barring Augustine's cathedral and library.

He was canonised by Pop Boniface VIII in 1298 CE. Today he is patron saint of theology, brewers, printers and sore eyes. Tradition has it that his body was later taken to Pavia, but there is also a claim that his remains were moved to Cagliari (Karalis).

2 Augustine and the Basic Medical Sciences

In the time of Augustine most learned persons besides physicians would have had some knowledge of the medical sciences, obtained from reading the works of famous philosophers and physicians of classical times, like Hippocrates, Aretaeus, Rufus, Soranus or Galen. As all these works were written in Greek, Augustine, without knowledge of Greek, might, however, have had difficulty comprehending them (Vindicianus, a famous physician of the 4th century and personally known to Augustine, did, however, write in Latin) (Cilliers & Retief 2006:84). But in his study of philosophy Augustine would also have come in contact with medical writings, and he does indeed write that his knowledge of Hippocrates (the only classical physician mentioned) was obtained from reading Cicero (*Civ.* 5.2). In her extensive publication on this subject Keenan suggests that Augustine's significant knowledge of medicine came largely from his philosophical readings, but also from the works of earlier Christian writers like Origen and Tertullian, as well as from Pliny the Elder and Celsius?

Besides extensive insight into clinical medicine, mentioned below, Augustine showed a good grasp of anatomy and physiology as understood at the time. He stated that current knowledge of anatomy was largely restricted to body structures evident on external inspection – little was known about internal organs. At the same time, however, he is very critical of "anatomists" who desecrated the body by dissecting corpses – and even dared to dissect sick patients for the sake of science, in order to inspect internal structures (*Civ.* 14.24; 22.24; *An. orig.* 4.3 and 6; 6.3). Much discussion went into the precise nature of the soul, which he considered to be essentially separate from the body – an immortal component, perhaps a fifth element, which continued to exist after death.

He was unsure whether the soul, mind, blood, brain or heart ruled the body (*An. orig.* 4.6–7; *Trin*. 10.9.10). The beautiful, purposeful structure of the body was to his mind a manifestation of the goodness and providence of God, designed for the service of a rational soul (*Civ.* 22.24). In some of his letters he discusses the Hippocratic concept of the four humours as the basis of bodily function and pathology (*Ep*. 205.3; 9.4; *Civ.* 11.34). Stating that full comprehension of bodily functions was impossible, his concepts of the limbs, brain, lungs, nerves and heart reflected the common wisdom of the day (*An. orig.* 137–8; 4.6.7; *Ep*. 137.6–8). However, his statement that arteries contain air (not blood) indicates that he was unaware of Galen's correction (2nd century) of this pre-Galenic misconception (Cilliers & Retief 2003:81–88). Could Augustine's inability to read Galen's Greek be partly responsible for this?

3 Augustine and Clinical Medicine

Augustine held physicians and the medical profession in high regard, and he obviously knew a number of eminent physicians personally. In his time physicians in North Africa were seen as men of social standing who maintained high professional ideals. They were influential citizens, more so than in Rome where this only was the case later (Keenan 1936:169–170).

Physicians mentioned by name in his writings included the eminent *Vindicianus* whom he knew personally and greatly admired. Vindicianus became proconsul and in this capacity he once crowned Augustine as victor in a rhetoric contest – probably in Carthage. Augustine said that his kind and fatherly advice cured him, a teacher of rhetoric, of youthful babblings in magic. This probably occurred in his late twenties when Vindicianus was already an elderly person. Augustine also quotes an occasion when Vindicianus in his treatment of a chronic invalid insisted on adapting the initially successful therapy in which the patient had great confidence. When onlookers then assumed that Vindicianus was now applying supernatural therapeutic procedures, this was firmly countered by him (*Ep*. 138.3; *Conf*. 4.3–5). In a letter to the bishop of Carthage, Aurelius, Augustine warmly recommended the physician *Hilarius*, *archiater* (head city physician) and *principalis* (head of the city senate) (*Ep*. 41.2). He also refers to a later *archiater*, *Dioscurus*, an excellent physician but non-believer, who out of devotion for his dying daughter made promises towards the church which he initially did not keep. After divine punishment with blindness and paralysis, he became a Christian (*Ep*. 227). *Gennadius* was a good physician and believer, also mentioned by Augustine because of the extraordinary way in which his initial doubts about an eternal life after death were laid to rest by very realistic dreams in which persons argued the case with him (*Ep*. 159.3). *Ammonius* is mentioned in a story about a very religious official in the Pope's office who was cured of haemorrhoids; other unnamed physicians also involved included a slave who had become a physician and a surgeon invited from Alexandria (*Civ.* 22.8). *Maximus* was a Christian physician recently converted from Arianism who

enjoyed a high social standing (*Ep*. 170.10). Augustine also records a very close bond of friendship between Lucillus, bishop of Sinita, and his physician whom he referred to as *familiarissimus suus medicus* (Keenan 1936:178). There was also a very close relationship between the physician of a certain Innocentia and members of her family (*Civ.* 22.8). Augustine informs us that new physicians in a community sought out the difficult cases in order to prove their ability and make a name for themselves (*Serm*. 176.4). In addition to regular fees physicians often received money and rewards from their patients (*Serm*. 84.1; 344.5). Physicians commonly did charity work without payment (*Serm*. 175.9; 176.4; *Ep*. 159.3). Augustine commented on the confidence the physicians inspired in his patients at the monastery and nuns at the sisters' convent (*Civ.* 22.8; *Serm*. 9.10; 80.30; *Enchir*. 16). He found the typical physician's patience proverbial; insults and abuse, even cruelty, were borne with grace (*Serm*. 175.2; 176.4; 359.4). Interestingly, he does not allude to unprincipled physicians (Keenan 1936:173). There is only one reference to midwives and this suggests that he frequently found them ignorant and unprincipled (*Civ.* 3.18). Augustine divided physicians into empiricists, dogmatists, methodists (schools of medical thought in classical times) and anatomists, without defining them further (*An. orig.* 4.7).

Augustine states that diseases are so numerous that they cannot be recorded in medical books (*Civ.* 22.22). In his writings there is mention of a large number of diseases, including dropsy, pulmonary tuberculosis, elephantiasis, cancer, tumours, rabies, paralysis, plague, gout, gallstones, insanity, convulsions, fistulae, eye diseases, toothache, spinal curvature and hernia (Keenan 1936:180–181). Some conditions are merely named; others are discussed to a greater or lesser extent. Keenan points out that leprosy is only referred to figuratively. We now know that true leprosy was known as elephantiasis in Augustine's time (Retief & Cilliers 2009:1–11). Augustine was well-informed about the physician's task of assuring a valid diagnosis and prognosis, before therapy is instituted. In classical times the preferred mode of management of illness was by diet and the institution of a healthy life-style (called regimen). Only if this was insufficient did pharmaceutical treatment, and ultimately surgery and cautery, come into play (Scribonius Largus, *Praef.* 6). Augustine showed his insight into this approach. He referred to the vital role surgery played, but also to the pain it caused (*Enarrat. Ps.* 102.5; *Serm*. 278.4). He once refers to the use of leeches (*Pat.* 6), but bloodletting is not discussed. The setting of fractures and the complex art of proper bandaging are mentioned (*Enarrat. Ps*. 146.6; *Doctr. chr.* 1.14). He stated that diseases may be caused by intemperate living (*Serm*. 156.2) and the excesses and perverse practices of married life (*Bon. conj*. 2.20 and 31). He referred to a variant of psychotherapy (*De mend.* 5.6; *Enarrat. Ps*. 102.6). Astrology was seen as magic and superstition, as was the use of sacrifices, amulets and incantations (*Serm*. 4.33 and 36; 8.2; 31.8.3; 28.7; *Enarrat. Ps*. 70.17; *Ep*. 98.1.5). There are several references to plasters and poultices (*Ep*. 185.45; *Doctr. chr*. 1.14; *Enarrat. Ps*. 90.6). He wrote on drugs as treatment (*Serm*. 126.8.10 and 156.8; *Civ.* 11.22) and warned that drugs are often taken not for medical

but for superstitions reasons, e.g., herbs hung around the neck, and mandragora taken for fecundity (*Faust.* 22.56; *Doctr. chr.* 29.2.45). Augustine strongly prohibited any form of abortion or propagation of sterility (*Bon. conj*. 17.15). Perhaps resulting from excesses in his young days, he later propagated very strong views on sexual practices: total abstention was the ideal, but sexual activity during marriage was permissible as long as it was not performed for the associated sexual pleasure (*Bon. conj*. 17.15). He considered demon possession a valid cause of illness (*Civ.* 22.8). Staring into water (hydromancy) or blood (necromancy) in order to determine the future, or communicate with the underworld, was unacceptable (*Civ.* 7.35).

Augustine debated the "heathen reports" that there were human monstrosities – one-eyed beings, persons with a single leg, or feet so large that the soles were turned up around the legs, and *cynocephali* (men with heads of dogs). He postulated that such beings, if they existed, were non-human monstrosities. All humans descended from Adam, but he accepted that human anatomical abnormalities existed, like club-shaped feet with only two toes, persons with evidence of both sexes, or born with a double set of upper parts but a single set of lower limbs (*Civ.* 16.18).

Augustine often referred to his delicate health (*Ep*. 10.1, 229 and 269). As a child he suffered from abdominal cramps which nearly caused his death. The suggestion that he be hurriedly baptised during one of these episodes was opposed by his mother (*Conf*. 1.11). During his stay in Rome he had at least one serious attack of fever (*Conf*. 5.9) and in Milan (30–34 years old) repeated episodes of pulmonary complaints: breathlessness and chest pain. At times he could not speak and he even considered abandoning his post as lecturer (*Conf*. 9.11.4). At this stage a dear friend of his died of fever (probably malaria) and this upset him greatly (*Conf*. 4.4). He became depressed and unsure of himself, whilst constant fear of death and judgement kept him from temptations of the flesh (*Conf*. 6.16). After his conversion to Christianity he had an attack of severe toothache which prevented him from talking (*Conf*. 9.4). On his way back to Africa (34 years old) his mother, Monica, died at the age of 56 years after 9 days of recurrent fever (*Conf*. 9.8–9) – almost certainly malaria. The cause of the subsequent death of his son is unknown. At his new home he developed severe haemorrhoids which at times totally incapacitated him, preventing walking, sitting and standing. The illness mentioned in his letter to Nebridius was probably haemorrhoids (Baxter 1980). The nature of his final illness in 430 (76 years old) is unclear.

Augustine's insight into health care matters resulted in him drawing up a most practical institutional guide (*Praeceptum*) for his monastery in Hippo, much superior to equivalent guides elsewhere, which paid little attention to health. He emphasized proper hygiene and in case of illness a physician's advice should be obtained and heeded. An individual who complained of feeling unwell should be referred for a medical opinion even though he might not appear ill. Fasting was proper as long as it did not cause harm. Persons should never be denied the right to visit public baths. For prevention of illness proper diets were important, and the ill should have direct access to the kitchen for proper food (Van Geest 2002:32–34).

4 Health and Religion

Augustine maintained a practical bond between his understanding of medicine and his theological convictions and teaching.

There are numerous examples of how he applied the principles of proper and professional health care to his teaching of Christianity – the "Christ as physician" approach, as Van Geest calls it (2002:30–31, 41). The pain often associated with essential surgery was for instance seen as equivalent to the suffering through which a soul in search of eternal peace may have to go. Of such suffering Augustine had ample experience in his younger days (Van Geest 2002:34; *Enarrat. Ps*. 21.2.4; 34.2.13; 40.6). A truly religious life commonly experienced serious ups and downs – very much like a serious fever which could only be cured through the prolonged cooperative efforts of physician and patient (Van Geest 2002:36; *Serm*. 9.10; 80.2). Serious illness is not cured through superficial treatment but only by a truly competent physician – similarly a steadfast religious life needed continuous effort and refreshment of vision (Van Geest 2002:36–37; *Tract. Ev. Jo.* CXXIV.25.16). Some of man's religious crises are extremely complex and can only be healed by God – like the good physician who varies his treatment according to needs (Van Geest 2002:38; *Doctr. chr*. 1.14.13). Illness often strikes without warning, but cure will come when the patient receives the appropriate attention – similarly Christ came to earth to specifically assist those in need of Him, not the righteous (Van Geest 2002:38; *Sermo Frangipane* 1, 3, 5, 10).

As mentioned above, Augustine accepted the principles of secular Hippocratic medicine as understood in classical times, rejecting magic and superstition as inter alia embraced in astrology, amulets, incantations, necromancy and hydromancy. He did, however, believe in miracle cures, examples of which he described in his *City of God* (*Civ.* 12.8). *Innocentius*, a Christian official in the Pope's quarters, had complicated fistulas, painfully but unsuccessfully treated by many surgeons. In desperation a well known surgeon from Alexandria was eventually consulted who confirmed that a further operation was needed. Greatly disturbed by this news, Innocentius duly requested a group of friends to pray with him on the evening before the operation. Surprisingly, the next morning it was found that the fistulas had healed. *Innocentia*, a pious lady, developed cancer of the breast which needed surgical excision. She was very upset but prayed to God, and was advised in a dream to request the first lady to be baptised at Easter and to sign her breast with the sign of Christ. This she did and the cancer disappeared. Augustine reported two instances (a physician with gout and an actor from Curubis with paralysis and hernia) where the illness disappeared after baptism. He also reported miracle cures in four persons who suffered from possession by demons: *Hesperius*, the ex-tribune, cured after prolonged prayer and a sacrifice; a young man cured after coming in contact with holy soil from Jerusalem; a young virgin cured after being salved with the tears of a presbyter, and a man cured by a bishop's prayers. Approaching the bodies of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius cured a blind man from Milan and a young lad in a coma caused by demon-possession. Augustine reported that contact with the shrine

of St. Stephen restored life to a dead boy, cured convulsions in another boy and healed three persons of gout. A prayer at the shrine cured the heathen aristocrat, *Martialis*, of severe illness. Touching relics of St. Stephen cured a blind woman, a bishop (*Lucullus*) of a fistula, and a presbyter (*Eucharius*) of stone. Personal garments placed on the shrine, restored life to a very pious lady, and the daughter of a Syrian. Oil from St. Stephen's shrine raised a banker's son from death. Seven sons and three daughters who suffered from severe tremor as punishment for abuse of their mother, were cured after praying at St. Stephen's Church during Passover. And then Possidius records that on his deathbed Augustine was requested to lay his hands on a sick man who had dreamt that this would cure him. Augustine conceded and the man was healed (Weiskotten 2008:57).

5 Discussion

Augustine's willingness to accept demon possession and miracle cures, while believing in Hippocratic secular medicine and denouncing superstition and magic as embodied in astrology, hydromancy and necromancy reflect a progressive change recognizable in Christian church dogma during the early centuries CE.

Initial Christianity showed little animosity towards Graeco-Roman medicine. There was indeed nothing in Hippocratic medicine seriously antithetical to Christian theology. Early church fathers accepted that miraculous cures were confined to the Gospel era. However, towards the end of the 2nd century significant shifts in basic theological thinking had set in, including progressive emphasis on demonic possession as cause of disease and miracle cures. At this time Roman persecution had put severe pressure on Christianity. However, Constantine's Edict of Milan in the early 4th century (313 CE) radically changed the situation. As Christianity was relieved from persecution, the organised church grew in strength, although it is unlikely that there was ever a time that more than 10% of Rome's population was Christian. The creation of Manichaeism in 310 CE then introduced a cult of ascetic "apostolic" faith, facilitating the widespread appearance of hermits and "holy men", with growing emphasis on supernatural healing and apostolic charismata. Magic, universally condemned by early Christians, now emerged with the popularisation of amulets, charms and incantations. The acceptance of healing saints and martyrs blossomed. Initially denounced by church leaders like Chrysostom (and Augustine), the dividing line between acceptable (miracle) supernatural healing and magic became blurred (Retief & Cilliers 2001:64–65).

In the evidence quoted above Augustine opposed magic and superstition, e.g., astrology, incantations, amulets and sacrifices – even warning against using baptism as a remedy (*Enarrat. Ps.* 70.17; *Ep*. 98.1 and 5). Yet among his description of miracle cures there are examples of patients cured by baptism, as the actor and Innocentia discussed above (*Civ.* 12.8), and by the offering of a sacrifice, as Hesperius discussed above (*Civ.* 12.8). Some patients suffered disease from demon possession, as the young man in a coma, the young man prayed for by a bishop, the physician with gout tormented in his

dreams by demons and the virgin from Hippo (*Civ.* 12.8). Augustine believed that a mother's curse could cause illness in her children, as the woman from Hippo with 10 children (*Civ.* 12.8), and clearly saw the healing power of the tears of a presbyter (*Civ.* 12.8 – the demon-possessed virgin of Hippo), and of certain saints, shrines, martyrs and relics as acceptable (not magical) supernatural healing (*Civ.* 12.8 and 9). The very sincere prayers often accompanying such miracle healing could of course throw a more acceptable light on the Christian validity of such incidents.

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THEOLOGY IN A HISTORICIST MODE: THE WORK OF SHEILA DAVANEY

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ABSTRACT

What will theology look like when a radical historical consciousness is taken seriously? This question underlies the work of the North American theologian Sheila Davaney. In the article a look is taken at the different, related components of her work, as she attempts to think consistently historically and develops her proposal for contemporary theology in conversation with a number of North American theologians of a historicist orientation.

1 Introduction

It was an article titled "Continuing the story but departing the text" in the volume *New horizons in feminist theology* (1997) that initially attracted my attention to the work of Sheila Davaney. As someone working in the field of New Testament scholarship – in which many are still focusing on texts, some even clinging to these, while others regard their task as primarily that of deconstructing an ancient past, the texts it produced and the discourses it effected, thus often aiming at discontinuing even the "story", with, of course, more nuanced, even different, positions between or beyond these – I was interested in how the "text" could be departed without thereby necessarily discontinuing the "story". Davaney's remark in the introduction to the book *Pragmatic historicism* (2000) that "it is for the purposes of life that we carry out the theological task" furthered interest in her work. Intellectually informed *and* also about life? New Testament scholarship in its most prominent manifestations, at least as practised in "secular" contexts, is often (inevitably?) only vaguely and indirectly concerned with life, or, more specifically, our lives. Or has this question become a dated one at a time when intellectual matters are no longer an ivory-tower affair, but are rejoining everyday life (Eagleton 2003:3)? Is this perhaps an illegitimate contrasting of matters – and disciplines? What she does is an extension, on a more comprehensive scale and in a specific way, of the implications

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of "historicity" for a "whole" tradition and into our time, something done in the case of biblical scholarship with regard to a more restricted period – with a non-traditional constructive element in it.

Reading more of her work, it turned out that her proposal for theology (both the "story" or rather "stories" she wants to continue, and the ways in which she wants to do this) is no simplistic shortcut, nor a one person's show: it is the result of a long road of taking seriously insights of different kinds (Western intellectual, liberationist, interdisciplinary, contemporary contexts) and "invented" in explicit and sustained critical dialogue with representatives of both past(s) and present(s). Making explicit her sources, both old and new, and the comprehensive and fair discussion of strands and views on which she draws and from which she partly differs, is a prominent feature of her work, without which it cannot be fully appreciated. Her dialogue with others is valuable in that it makes explicit that seemingly new insights are often not at all new, but have often gone unnoticed, also and perhaps especially on the South African theological scene, as a result of scholarly amnesia, the restricted preferences and views of academics, and the fragmentation of theology into separate disciplines. Her informed and fair kind of discourse may, moreover, problematise the sweeping and one-sided nature of some kinds of discourses that are currently entering the debate on religion, sometimes by scholars from other disciplines (cf. the responses of Eagleton 2008 and Vorster 2009 to Richard Dawkins). Not least is her work insightful and important as a result of the broad fields of research to which one is exposed in the process of reading it, and the crucial contemporary issues on which she focuses.

A mosaic of interrelated aspects and issues, the defining characteristic of Davaney's work is taking historicity, that is a radical historical consciousness, seriously and attempting to do so consistently in dealing with a religious tradition, mainly Christianity, and in her proposal for contemporary theology. The other main threads running through all of her work, those of interconnectedness and non-essentialism, are closely intertwined with this basic one. Implementing historicity as analytical category boils down to the question what theology will look like after reason, revelation and experience have all been questioned as access routes to absolute or timeless truth (Davaney 2000:156; 2006:179). In the following, a brief look is taken, firstly, at the strands of philosophical, religious and theological thought on which she draws; secondly, the contemporary context(s) in which theology is, according to her, nowadays practised and which it should address; thirdly, her view of a religious tradition, and related to this, fourthly, her version of historicist theology as it crystallises out in conversation with other scholars, religion and its relation to culture and the implications of this for theology.

2 The Embeddedness of the Discourse of Sheila Davaney

Since Davaney integrates diverse insights into her work, a brief overview is needed of some of the discourses and views to which hers is related and indebted, thus the historical developments which brought us where we are. This includes aspects of Western philosophical and theological thought, especially its European and North American historicist and its American pragmatic strands (Davaney 2006:21–119).

Like many other contemporary "theological stories", hers begins with Enlightenment modernity, its emphasis on universal reason as access route to truth, its negative view of tradition and therefore its ideal to wipe the slate clean of it (Davaney 2006:148; cf. also Cady 2001). However, as is nowadays commonly realised, modernity did not form a unity; it was plural in nature (cf. Paz 2007:252). While Enlightenment modernity dismissed history and tradition, modernity's second phase – what Davaney calls historicist modernity – evaluated tradition positively, something often not taken into account when modernity is discussed. She also points out that Romanticism, the counterpart of (or response to) Enlightenment modernity, emerged in significant part out of historicist impulses (2006:32), with the theology resulting from it having historicist characteristics. The work of Friedrich Schleiermacher may serve as an example of this. Though in contemporary theorising of religion his work is commonly problematised for its universal and essentialist slant (cf. Cady 1991:27; Murphy 2007:51), and this side of his work would during the past century and a half become very influential, not only should the historicist side of his view on religion be acknowledged, as does happen so some extent; it should be noted that in conceptualising theology he already moved away from regarding the task of theology as the discernment of absolute and timeless truth. With Schleiermacher, theology became a descriptive and explanatory science, describing how people motivated by Christian faith talk about their faith and explaining why they talk this way (Forstman in Davaney 2006:36, 37). Although mostly not fully implemented, historicist theology has been in the making for a long time. Apart from tracing historicist sensibilities quite far in the past, in her discussion of European historicist trends Davaney emphasises the mixed nature of our intellectual lineages/inheritances, that contemporary theological options "have developed not out of singular lines of inheritance but in response to many" (2000:17).

While drawing on and critically responding to European philosophical and theological thought since the Enlightenment, Davaney, like the contemporary historicist theologians with whose work she links up, is also and especially influenced by the views of the scholars of religion from the early Chicago school in North America: their dealing with religion, including Christianity, as a social and cultural phenomenon that developed over time; their rejection of an unchanging core in all religions or in a specific one; their emphasis on the social setting of religious ideas, doctrines and practices for understanding these and their problematising of timeless truth. She is, moreover,

indebted to the American philosophical trajectory with its emphasis on "openness to science and the scientific method, a strong sense of history, a spirit of experimentation, a pragmatic interpretation of truth, a belief, especially in William James, that reality exceeds the linguistic and the conscious and a confidence in and loyalty to democratic processes" (Davaney 2000:13).

Drawing on Western intellectual insights of different kinds, hers is not an elitist Western discourse. Contributions from liberation theologies (black, feminist) are pointed out and taken seriously: the fact that, in their insistence that not all contemporary theology emerges out of the same concerns or commitments, liberationist theologians remind us of the concrete and particular location of all thought, including theology, and that they introduced the issue of power into theological discourse in a way that has not happened before. Liberation perspectives have, moreover, been theology's access to developments beyond the academy and church (Davaney 2000:17, 18).

3 Historicity and the Context of Contemporary Theology: Insights, Questions, Conversation Partners

Since historicity in Davaney's case also and especially implies taking seriously our own context, or historical moment, how is this moment seen? Though she speaks from a North American perspective, in a global context her construal resonates in various respects with the South African one. With regard to "our" historicist moment, she points to the "complexities, ambiguities and even contradictions of the historical events to which we are heir", to the fact that the processes of which history are comprised are nowadays realised to be shaped by and the effective vehicles of the deployment of power. It is therefore emphasised that our moment's past is not merely characterised by positive historical potential, but by horrific events that human beings wrought, with progress no longer seen as inherent in history (Davaney 2000:2; cf. Paz 2007:254). With regard to religion in general, she points to the growing awareness of, and sensitivity to, the religiously plural nature of modern society, the changing nature of Christianity, as it is becoming less of a European and American religion and therefore internally even more pluralistic, and alienation of Western Christians from their religious traditions, resulting in the question how these can still contribute to the moral and public spheres. Her context is, moreover, one shaped by an awareness of ecological deterioration. (Davaney 2000:20, 21).

To Davaney's construction of a contemporary context for theology belong current views on humanity and the cosmos. Though the notion of historicity in a sense problematises general theories about these, assumptions on them in any case function in theological discourses and should therefore be made explicit. Taking the premises of one's own time seriously, a critical congruence between our theological assumptions and our other beliefs and practices, is therefore crucial to her work (2000:55, 58, 59). Not to do this would mean "the arbitrary adoption of another era's convictions no less

contingent and historical than ours, and leads at best to irrelevance and at worst to a dangerous intensification of our various crises" (Mc Fague in Davaney 2000:55). The conversation partners needed for responding to current crises are, in her view, natural and social scientists since, even if science can no longer make claims to objective and universal truth, in our historical moment it substantially contributes to our worldviews (2000:59). Listening to the social and natural sciences could also assist in moving away from the truncated view of human beings as linguistic beings situated within the confines of human history, with little attention to humans as embodied creatures who exist in a physical universe (Dean in Davaney 2000:59).

The view of the cosmos and of being human that functions in her work is that of the "common creation story", according to which all of the universe has a common source, with humanity a product of the same cosmic process that brought forth all else, and everything therefore related to everything else. This implies both the decentering of humanity and humanity's unique responsibility (Davaney 2000:59; cf. also Kennedy 2006:258–260). Being human is, importantly, conceptualised in comprehensive terms: humans as cognitive and embodied beings, who "feel their way through life" (2000:24), and who, apart from their natural setting, exist within cultures of which the material and political character should be taken seriously. This view of being human is, as she points out, not that of the "playful, depoliticised self" encountered in some forms of postmodernism (Davaney 2000:61).

Some, perhaps most of these matters are currently on the agenda in South Africa, at least in some quarters, although not necessarily as part of theological reflection. It is indeed striking that aspects of the contemporary context she sketches, and of her proposal for theology in the twenty first century, discussed below, closely resemble the contours for and possible components of a proposed "new" humanism for dealing with issues in the South African society, issues such as creating a more humane society and ensuring the long term survival on planet earth. In a recent article titled "'n 'Nuwe' humanisme" (a "new" humanism), distinguished in various respects from its precedents, written in preparation for a conference where these issues were to be discussed, the following are mentioned: a realisation of the role played by humans in the current crises and the limitations of human abilities, that is, a self-critical and humble approach; a move from human beings in the centre of things to focusing on life itself; the importance of including, in deliberations on being human and the functioning of human societies, voices from other than Western cultures; the need for a complex view of being human which incorporates not only philosophical and ethical aspects, but also biological and psychological dimensions of human behaviour; an emphasis on context, that is, a move away from supposed universal and timeless solutions and an emphasis on each generation's responsibility for its own specific historical situation; the importance of dialogical and participatory discourses; a move to normative statements and an emphasis on human agency (Lategan 2010:6, 7).

4 Historicity, the "Opening Up" of a Religious Tradition and the Relation between Past and Present

If historicity turns us to our present moment, in the case of a religious tradition it turns us to our past and poses the question of the relation between the past and our present (Davaney 2000:ix). The question of the character of a religious tradition and of the relation between past and present, including the significance of the past for today, is crucial to Davaney's position. By means of careful attention to these matters she distinguishes her own theological position, which she calls pragmatic historicism or pragmatic historicist theology, from other contemporary theological strands which take historicity seriously (post-liberals, revisionists), and from some co-pragmatic historicists (2000:29–50; 81–118). In order to understand her proposal for theology the distinction between what Brown calls religious and academic theology should be kept in mind. While the former is about "clarifying, extending and defending the religious practices and ideas of religious communities," and is governed by the norms of the religious communities concerned, the latter, while critically analysing and reconstructing the ideas and practices of religious communities, does so by using values and norms defensible in the academic community (Brown 2001:50, 51).

Taking historicity seriously implies, according to Davaney, the contingency, particularity, concreteness and pluralistic nature of human existence. Embedded in human existence and culture, a religious tradition is, for her, both a lived and living (changing, developing) entity, something that exists and is practised by "real people" in the "real world". This implies that, though religious traditions are specific in nature, they are not singular and unified, but internally pluralistic, encompassing multiple, even conflicting factors, and can therefore not be reduced to an essence or a core that remains unchanged over time (2006:148). In this regard she writes: "There is not and never has been one self-same story found in the originating narratives of Christian tradition…there have been various stories of God, Jesus, what it means to be human, and these cannot be reduced to one another or to an abstract set of rules. Even at the beginning, there was not one Christian story, agreed upon by all. Christianity's origins, like the rest of history, are unstable and contested (2006:39)." Taking the multiplicity, particularity and concreteness of a religious tradition into account would imply that the Christian tradition should not be "reduced" to some element in the past that has been selected and arbitrarily elevated. From a historicist perspective it should be realised to be about the "full range of concrete historical existence that has shaped us and that funds the historical process" (2006:90). The following statement pointedly sums up her position: "Religious traditions are not reducible to either material or abstract essences but are conglomerations of all that developed throughout their history" (2000:89). In the light of this historicist "opening up" of the past and of a religious tradition, she finds the privileging of classics such as the Bible and their prioritising problematic. To privilege these would mean that we are in critical dialogue with only a small section of the historical lineage, one, moreover,

that has been privileged by processes of power that not only included, but also excluded. Taking historicist insights seriously implies, moreover, the acknowledgement that what we have inherited in terms of visions, values and interpretations of reality is historically contingent, the residue of earlier human construals (Davaney 1997:211; 2006:146, 147). This coheres with her acknowledgement that "all knowledge is localised, that humans have no access to the world in an unmediated manner, and that the search for sure and certain knowledge applicable for all times and places is misguided and illusory" (2000:23).

Apart from the lack of uniformity within a religious tradition, it is according to her not clearly differentiated from other traditions, both religious and otherwise (political, economic, class, gender). A tradition's boundaries are not fixed, but porous and are continually shifting (2006:149). Human beings are therefore, especially at this stage in history, not merely traditioned, but multi-traditioned. As will become clear, this view in the end also informs her proposal for theology.

If historicity implies contingency, particularity and concreteness, it does not, in her view, imply isolation. Like some of the early American historicists, she thinks of history not in terms of clearly delineated eras or segments, but as a process comprised of multiple processes (socio-political, economic, intellectual, religious, cultural), which interact with each other (Davaney 2000:2; 2006:146, 147). Between past and present, and between contemporary entities, complex relations exist, which should be acknowledged and taken seriously. She is therefore critical of what she calls the "cavalier way" in which some deconstructionists, while sharing some sentiments with historicists, deal with the past (2000:195, note 20). While a naive sense of historical uniformity or continuity between past and present can no longer be assumed, human beings are influenced and shaped by the past, even when they reject it (2000:3). Since humans are traditioned beings, it is important to engage the past, to gain knowledge of where we have come from. The past may, moreover, be a potential source of resources for today, since it provides access to the "raw materials" out of which contemporary persons construct their views and ways of being (Davaney 2006:157). However, taking the past seriously and acknowledging a real relation between past and present is not finding in it an essence that can merely be continued unchanged. The past can, moreover, not be regarded as the obvious site of normativity, since it is just as contingent and fallible as the present and merely by being past does not acquire some authority denied the present (2000:63). Apart from finding positive potential in it, engaging the past is also exposing its negative aspects and its detrimental effects.

In her view of the character of a religious/the Christian tradition, of the status of the past and the relation between past and present, she differs substantially from other influential contemporary theological trajectories in North America, which have also been developed out of historicist concerns and with which she therefore shares some sentiments, that of revisionist theology (David Tracy) and post-liberalism (George Lindbeck). She discusses the views of these theologians extensively, something which

cannot receive detailed attention here (cf. Davaney 2000:29–50; 2006:133–144). Aspects of David Tracy's work that she finds problematic are, firstly, that, despite the changes and refinements that his work has undergone through time he still uses the language of classics, therefore still suggesting that historical traditions have stable essences, and, secondly, that he still focuses strongly on the past at the cost of the present and future. She differs from Lindbeck's view of stability, continuity and normativity at the centre of the Christian tradition, with an invariant core that remains unchanged throughout history, his view of theology as primarily a descriptive and confessional enterprise and therefore not a public enterprise, that we are traditioned and not multi–traditioned, and that, in his version of theology, it again becomes an authoritarian endeavour (2006: 142, 143).

5 Theology from a Historicist Perspective: A Specific Kind of Engagement with a (Specifically Conceptualised) Tradition, in Conversation with Other Pragmatic Historicists

Davaney's own proposal for theology is especially developed in conversation with a number of contemporary theologians whom she typifies as co-pragmatic historicists, despite some differences between them. Reference to and brief descriptions of their positions are therefore necessary, however incomplete this will have to be here. Apart from providing the horizon/contours for her own work, these theologians' works are valuable in their own right; they provide important insights on how religious traditions are currently seen and dealt with, of how contemporary theology is conceptualised and practised within a specific strand of theology in North America.

Apart from differences, the work of these theologians is characterised, as Davaney claims, by a number of similar concerns: an "outward move" as opposed to an "inward" one, attention to contemporary context(s), including insights from the social and natural sciences, and, on the whole, an "open" view of tradition, with theology made to cohere, in some way, with this. In dealing with the work of co-pragmatic historicist theologians (Gordon Kaufman, Sallie Mc Fague, Linell Cady, William Dean, Delwin Brown), and their approaches to the past and to tradition, she painstakingly carries out her consistently historicist program, with historicity becoming the criterion for adjudicating aspects of their work. Her discussion of three of these will briefly be dealt with: Gordon Kaufman for the substantial historicist trend in his work, Sallie Mc Fague, since in dealing with her work Davaney's consistently historical approach becomes clear and Delwin Brown, whose views closely resemble hers.

According to Gordon Kaufman religions should be seen as encompassing frameworks that provide human beings with orientation and meaning in life and delineate their place within the wider cosmos (Davaney 2000:83–85; 2006:159, 169; cf. also Geertz 2009; Lindbeck in Davaney 2006:138). Religions are human constructions which have

developed and have been transformed over time as the circumstances in which they functioned and the challenges to which they had to respond changed, therefore differing in different times and geographical areas. What characterises them as religions is not that they are non-historical, but that they are all-encompassing and comprehensive (Davaney 2006:160). Despite their human constructedness, they nevertheless intend the real and provide their adherents with normative visions. They are, however, not neutral, but affected by the interests (class, culture, race and gender) of those who produce and continue them, and therefore embody "both life-giving and life-denying possibilities". Although religious traditions are, according to Kaufman, continually transformed by its participants, in some traditions there is also self-conscious critical reflection upon these, that is, theological reflection. Theology is then defined by him as the "analysis, criticism and reconstruction" of comprehensive interpretations of reality, a practical undertaking which provides human beings with value and meaning (Davaney 2000:83–85). Despite Kaufman's emphasis on tradition as a dynamic process characterised by change and diversity, it is, according to him, also shaped and ordered by a categorical scheme. In the case of the Christian tradition, he identifies these categories as humanity, the world, Christ and God. Though he does not fill these with a single and unchanging content, from a historicist perspective Davaney finds this view and procedure problematic in that the concrete specificities of a religious tradition are in this way not taken seriously. Tradition is here again restricted to "abstract essences", while "'real Christianity' in all of its concrete messiness falls by the wayside…" (2000:90). The "opening up" is here, in a sense, "closed down". To admit that Christianity is diverse would, according to her, be to admit that much of its diversity results from focusing on other categories than these four. Related to this emphasis on a few categories is that the relation between the present and what is inherited is, in her view, not theorised adequately. "An adequate historicism must point us back not to some arbitrarily elevated element of the past…but to the full range of concrete historical existence that has shaped us and that funds the historical process" (2000:90).

One of the positives of this view, according to Davaney, is that the split between secular and sacred is blurred. In her most recent work, in line with current cultural theory's de-essentialising and de-unifying view of traditions, and the realisation that individual identities are often made up of multiple sources, and do not fit neatly into one overarching worldview, Davaney moves away from the view of religions as overarching worldviews (2006:160, 161).

Davaney's view of the nature of (a religious) tradition and the relation between inheritance and contemporary construction also becomes clear from her discussion of Sallie Mc Fague's work. Aspects of Mc Fague's work are pointed out, many of which she is in agreement with, such as an emphasis on contemporary context(s), especially a context characterised by ecological deterioration, our location in traditions, which are concrete, not abstract, and that there exist competing construals of a tradition, not final ones. However, looking through her historicist lens, Davaney spots problematic

aspects in Mc Fague's work. Not only does McFague identify and employ the notion "the heart of Christian faith", an essentialist one. This "heart" is, according to Davaney, actually a contemporary interpretation of what the living Christian tradition should be for this moment. The Jesus story of love of and solidarity with the oppressed has here been altered to include nature, something which would be inconceivable in Jesus' time. In appealing to Jesus, the "paradigmatic embodiment" of Christian faith, and to the Christian tradition for this, this altered Jesus story, made possible by the contemporary scientific story, is illegitimately bolstered by "implied appeal to more than historical grounds" (2000:98). Over against this Davaney restates her view that traditions have no essences, that, while "particular elements of the past may make more of a claim upon us today than do others, the reasons for doing so relate to their continued viability and usefulness, not to an assumption that they represent the true centre of a tradition or are its paradigmatic rendition" (2000:97).

Much of what she herself advocates is to be found in the work of Delwin Brown. In most of it one almost hears her own voice. This includes, among others, the given, inherited, traditioned and conditioned nature of human existence (the principle of givenness), and, on the other hand, the principle of agency, that is, that we are in a sense "made" by the past as well as constructive agents of the present and future. These are, in Brown's view, not opposite matters, but interconnected ones (Davaney 2000:104). His view of culture as unstable is shared in her work on religious traditions and tradition as such. Important, moreover, is his view of a canon as including not just a small body of classical texts, not just textual or even cognitive elements, but apart from symbols, stories and institutions, also moral practices, rituals and even feelings (2000:105, 106). The past is, for him, always constitutive of the present and therefore has to be engaged, not jettisoned or ignored. This does not imply that the present merely repeats a settled past. This would be contrary to both the diverse and fluid nature of a canon, as defined by him, and the nature of human interpretation and appropriation as creative transformation, which results in something new (2000:106, 107). Finally, Brown emphasises that our inheritance includes, apart from textual and cognitive elements, noncognitive and non-linguistic elements as well. Our engagement with them should, moreover, be on more than an intellectual level, that is, through ritual, bodily enactment and feelings. "Traditions live or die not only because of their intellectual content but also by the richness of their nondiscursive practices and sensibilities" (Brown in Davaney 2000:108ff.). What she finds problematic in Brown's work is what she calls his "monotraditionalism", that he does not take seriously the syncretistic nature of traditions and the complex ways they come into being and are continually developing (2000:108, 109).

In spelling out her own proposal for theology, a number of matters are mentioned, some of which have already been pointed out when discussing her view of a religious tradition. Important to note here is her assumption of the complex contexts of interwoven realities in which human beings exist (2000:111). Part of this picture is that humans' historicity has taken cultural forms, and that they therefore "exist within and receive

direction from humanly devised interpretations of life, meaning, value and practice", including religious traditions. The internal plurality, even the syncretistic nature of traditions are emphasised, and that traditions and their symbol systems are embedded in the material processes of life, including biological, political, economic and psychological processes. A move away from the mere linguistic is therefore needed (2000:114).

Over against more traditional positions, she alleges that what makes a tradition a particular tradition "is not that something specific is retained…but that something is contended with and that out of that contention new, even widely deviant portrayals of reality and of human life take form" (2000:113). If a statement such as this nearly prompts one to ask if, and why, a tradition is still needed, apart from the fact that one never starts in the middle of nowhere, in other statements quite a substantial role is ascribed to tradition. This happens, for example, when she defines the task of theology in a historicist mode as "the identification, examination, assessment, and reconstruction of historical traditions of interpretation and practice so that humans might more fruitfully and responsibly live within our complex and interdependent universe" (2000:114). To carry out the theological task the historical character of human life should, according to her, be recognised. This requires that the historical traditions "that provide the raw materials for the construction of the present and the future", should be engaged (2000:114). Engaging a tradition does not merely entail engaging texts, doctrinal formulations and symbol systems, but also engaging its concrete particularities, contending with the messiness of history. Moreover, since our traditions come to us, according to her, "not in neat packages but as multiple and contending conglomerations", it is our responsibility to decide what should be continued, opposed or transformed (2000:188). Out of the creative engagement with a tradition, in light of new circumstances novel possibilities arise (2006:157). Historicist theology is, in her view, clearly about dealing with a comprehensively defined and contentious tradition in a creative, critical and constructive way.

6 Historicity, Religion and the Turn to Culture: Theology as Cultural Criticism

In dealing with theology in a historicist mode, attention has up to now mainly been paid to the character of religious traditions, as conceptualised by historicist theologians, and the way they should be dealt with. There is another aspect of Davaney's work, closely related to her view of religious traditions, actually already integrated in how she conceptualises these, which for various reasons deserves separate attention. Not only does it, at least partly, arise from another "matrix" than that by which her historicism is fed; it provides insight into a specific, though related, turn that her work takes, her focus on the relation between religion and culture and the implications of this for her conceptualisation of theology. Leading up to the relation religion-culture in her work, and the implications of this for theology, a few remarks are made about a view of religion

which has been influential for a long time and from which she, and others, nowadays depart.

Davaney's view on religion or religions (often interchangeable in her work) coheres with that of contemporary theorists of religion who have moved away from defining religion as "a unique phenomenon that demands its own methodologies and interpretive categories" (2001:7), "an empirical category, corresponding to some experience or attitude that is discernible in cultures across time and space" (Cady 2001:23). This view – which for centuries seemed obvious and became extremely influential – is nowadays exposed by many scholars as a modern Western construct, with a specific history. It is pointed out by some scholars of religion and theology that "Enlightenment religion" and its romantic counterpart both constituted a "containment" which contributed to the trend in the modern period to separate religion from other dimensions of human life (Cady 2001:25). In an article "Loosening the category that binds" Cady traces some of the roots of and developments resulting in the modern view of religion, a view characterised, according to her, by the following: an essential core in all religions, religion as unrelated to a specific place and time, and primarily interior, a move from faith as trust to something that one believes or does not believe, something whose propositions are true or not, and, as a result of the romantic reaction to Enlightenment influences, the substitution of feeling for propositions at the heart of the religious life (2001:27). The limitations of this view of religion, and its many side effects, are nowadays increasingly realised. It is pointed out that although religion was, especially with the turn to religious experience, protected and provided with its own space, this space was private in nature, and contributed to the marginalisation and disempowerment of religion in modern society (Proudfoot 1991:113). According to Asad "This construction of religion ensures that it is part of what is inessential to our common politics, economy, science and morality" (in Cady 2001:30). On the other hand it is contended that, in de-emphasising difference, history and socio-political context, this concept of religion obscures the overlap between issues of spirituality and power, with "private religion" living on uncritically (McCutcheon in Cady 2001:28). Specifically as expressed in the notion "world religions", this concept of religion is unable to spot and accommodate contemporary forms of religiosity (Cady 2001:34–36). Still another consequence of this concept of religion, with its accompanying distinction between "secular" and "religious", is the perpetuation of the "fiction" of a neutral secular sphere, with secularism regarded as necessarily less violent than religion (cf. Cady 2001:30; Jakobsen 2004).

The modern "containment" of religion had crucial implications for the conceptualisation and practice of theology. It contributed to keeping theology at the university in its "own place", resulting in a specific kind of theological faculty and a narrowing of its subject matter, aggravated through theology's fragmentation into different divisions. With the problematising of the modern category of "religion" it again becomes possible to focus, in the study of religions and theology, on culture.

"Insofar as theological attention to cultural analysis correlates with the problematising of the category of religion, whether intentionally or not, it harbours a potentially radical shift within the discipline of theology" (Cady 2001:8, 34).

The move to culture, in many disciplines, including theology, and changes in the way culture is conceptualised, originated, according to Davaney, from numerous sources. These include theoretical shifts in other disciplines, a variety of postmodernisms, the taking seriously of historicity and its consequences, and, important for some facets of her work, black theological and feminist liberationist insights, which positioned religion within culture. With regard to the latter, Hopkins (20001:8) points to the problematisation, in the aftermath of the black liberation movement in America, of "distancing conceptual claims from the life and death happenings in any epoch," which resulted in the positioning of religion within culture, particularly in the racial and power dynamics of culture.

Davaney (2001:5) points to the following shifts in the view of culture, also relevant for religion(s): that cultures are no longer regarded as coherent and static, but as dynamic and contentious processes by which meaning, and with it, power is produced (2001:5; 1996:257); that knowledge and meaning are realised to be produced not only by the elites, but also by "ordinary people", including those who are socially and culturally marginalised, that is, a move to and valuing of the ordinary, and importantly, that the scope of culture is increasingly enlarged to include not only ideas, texts and symbolic productions, but also the material dimensions of culture (Davaney 1996:256; 2001:9).

Regarded as part of cultures, back in the "thick of things", similar shifts are, according to Davaney, nowadays taking place in views on religion and the study thereof. Some of these were already referred to in the discussion of religious traditions, such as their concrete, and particular, dynamic and continually changing character and their relation to social realities, political power and economic systems (Davaney 1996:25). Importantly, as in other disciplines concerned with culture, a turn to "ordinary people", to the "popular" is taking place in religion and theology. This move is accompanied by a move from a focus on texts, symbols and doctrines towards the material practices and dimensions of religions, a paying attention to the "concrete and particular forms of Christian life, practices and beliefs" (1996:258, 259; 2006:162). Other sites of meaning and value than linguistic ones, including the body, institutions, ritual and art are regarded as data of religious reflection. In this regard she quotes Lawrence Sullivan, according to whom the fixation on textual metaphors and methods "misses the reality that the religious conditions of humanity lie largely beyond the sacrality of scripture" (Davaney 2000:115; 1996:257; Sullivan 1990:45). If this is the case, it may perhaps be no wonder that popular religion in the South African context, far removed as it often is from elite theologies (cf. Tanner 2001:103), is still largely untouched by an "informed" understanding of biblical texts.

The moves to culture, to religion as part of culture, and to the religion of ordinary people have, according to Davaney, not been without problems. There has been, by

some, an uncritical romanticising of popular culture and religiosity. In some cases this move led to the replacement of reason giving by reference to social location as source of legitimising positions (2001:10). With regard to culture as analytical construct, she, moreover asks "what is left out when human life is so exhaustively portrayed as cultural" (2001:14). Cady (2001:40, note 64) also cautions against an overcorrection, which could lead the transformation of theology into a variant of cultural studies. On the positive side, Davaney points out that the move to culture reconnected academic theologians working in this strand to concrete communities and traditions of belief and practice, to what she calls, quoting Cady, the "morass of lived religion" (Davaney 2006:164). Popular religion, practical in character and intent as it is, and embedded in "real life" (cf. Tanner 1996), becomes a contributing factor to how Davaney in the end conceptualises both religion and theology. Admitting that (re)conceptualising religion is still an unfinished project, in its concrete manifestations she especially relates it with the historical, practical need to give meaning and direction to life (cf. also, though somewhat differently, Armstrong 2009:305–316). Having left pretensions of absolute truth, attained by either revelation or reason, behind, and problematising, in the light of historicist insights, also the history of ideas model of theology, theology becomes, in her view, one form of human historical and cultural discourse. She defines theology as a "second-order discourse whose attention is directed at the beliefs and practices of historical communities". Theology in this mode might best be characterised as "a form of cultural analysis and criticism that is distinguished from other cultural discourses by virtue of its concern with those human formations we are designating religions…that give meaning and direction to human existence" (2006:161). The task of the theologian becomes "engagement of complex traditions in all their messiness" (2006:164), an engagement in which the theologian does not merely study these for interest's sake, but through which s/he wants to recover an effective voice in the cultural arena. In fact, this "cultural turn" may, in her view, serve as an opportunity for rethinking the role of theology in the academy (2001:10, 11). Problematising the contrasting of academic theology and religious studies, she calls for theology as an integral part of the study of religion (2001:13). She, moreover, points to the need for other conversation partners than biblical scholars and philosophers, and for analytical tools that will enable theologians to interpret the concrete particularities of religious beliefs and practices (Davaney 1996:260).

7 Theology as Public, Inclusive, Constructive, Normative and Future–Oriented

Up to now attention has been paid to the kind of engagement with a religious tradition, conceptualised in a specific way, which historicist theology**,** in Davaney's view, requires, and to the focus on the beliefs and practices of ordinary people as part of the task of this form of theology. There are other, related, characteristics of historicist theology as conceptualised by her.

Importantly, pragmatic historicism is, according to her, a public form of theology, inclusive of many voices. The whole thrust of Davaney's work, especially her emphasis on the interconnectedness of historical existence, points in this direction. (2000:155, 156). Apart from this basic thrust of her work, she points to reasons specifically related to some pragmatic historicists' views on the nature of traditions, which push in the direction of theology as a public endeavour. In this regard she specifically links up with Gordon Kaufman's view/interpretation of religious traditions and of the symbol of God (Davaney 2000:156, 157; in her later book, as noted above, she moved away from this view to a more fragmented view of a religious tradition, cf. 2006:160, 161). Since religious traditions, as conceptualised by Kaufman, make comprehensive claims, these should be widely tested in relation to an inclusive agenda, while the broadest range of data are taken into account. In the case of theistic religions, specifically Christianity, there is, moreover, an explicit theistic reason for this "testing". This has to do with how the symbol of God is seen by some pragmatic historicists, namely as "the symbolic personification of theistic communities' understanding of the ultimate in terms of which human life is to be led" (Davaney 2000:156). Defined in this way, the symbol of God has "universal implications" (Davaney 2000:156; Cady 1993:99). Since all our notions of God are, according to Kaufman, human constructions, they are open to question and debate in the public sphere. And, since this symbol "intends to give expression to what is ultimate in life, in the face of the mystery of existence…it critically functions to undercut all human tendencies towards self-absolutizing and move those who utilise it to a stance of continual re-evaluation" (Davaney 2000:157). These connotations of the symbol of God call, in Kaufman's view, for "unrestricted interchange among all interested parties" (in Davaney 2000:157). In the view of pragmatic historicists theology should be public because of theology's broad and inclusive concerns. It should, moreover, be public because, for theology to be relevant it will have to argue its claims in public contexts, beyond its own locale and interests (Davaney 2000:160; 2006:167, 168).

The notion "public" is, of course, one with a complex history, which cannot be dealt with in detail here (cf. Cady 1993:1–118). Suffice it to say that, with the acknowledgement of the conditioned, non-neutral character of all human constructions, this notion is nowadays no longer regarded to have the supposed neutral and universalistic connotations it once had (Davaney 2006:168). From a historicist perspective Davaney defines "public" as an "ever-widening web of historical particularities", in which communication and debate is complex, since shared values and commitments do not exist from the start, but which holds the potential for "new modes of solidarity emergent out of respectful and serious engagement" (2006:168). In theological discourses attention should be paid to more than the own and the familiar, while theological claims should especially be tested in terms of how the historical existence of those without power is hindered or supported by them (2000:162). What an inclusionary procedure, in Davaney's view, does not imply and should not be striven for is the overcoming of plurality: "…neither within nor across religious and theological traditions can we expect nor should we want uniformity of belief or practice" (2000:161–162). And: "Orthodoxies, be they

liberal or conservative, progressive or reactionary, belie the pluralism and dynamism of historicity" (2000:163). This does not exclude the ideal of at least temporary, localised and revisable consensus (2000:164–166).

As voices to be included in the public theological task, she identifies three kinds of voices: those of "non-persons", of religious traditions and of nature. Taking as point of departure the work of Gustavo Gutierrez, *The power of the poor*, in which he alleged that in the wake of modernity much of theology responded to the question of the "non-believer", a modernist project of the powerful with disregard of the world's "non-persons" (in his view the poor), she asks whether this holds true for her own proposal for theology. In the sense that her project seeks intellectual coherence with contemporary interpretations of the world/reality this does pertain to her work, though it should immediately be qualified. Not only are the "non-persons", in a world in which everything is interrelated, also affected by these contemporary assumptions; pragmatic historicism's social ontology, and its resulting inclusionary practices, require that the fate of the dispossessed should not only be part of the data of theological reflection, but that "these voices must be theological speakers for themselves" (2000:168). She therefore calls for the democratisation of theology. For this to happen, it is crucial to first address the conditions that result from the disparity of power. She, moreover, broadens the concept "non-person" to include every group or individual "who in a given context is rendered invisible or denied access to the means of self-determination" (2000:168).

In the aftermath of "historicity", and with the correspondence theory of truth problematised, conversations among different religious traditions become, for various reasons, important. Not only should, in the social universe presupposed by pragmatic historicism, the adequacy of theological claims be tested with more than "our intimate associates" (2000:161). Taking the urgent needs of our world into account, she sides with those who think that new interpretations more adequate to our time should be forged not only from one's own tradition, but from the resources of the many religious and secular traditions available to us. Thus the use of these traditions has to become part of theology's constructive task (cf. 2000:172, 174, 176). And, if humans are no longer regarded to be in the centre of things but related to other creatures and natural phenomena, this has somehow to be taken into account in human decisions (2000:180).

Taking historicity and the character of the past and of a religious tradition seriously – that it is complex and diverse, a mixture of good and evil, with no enduring essence to merely fall back upon – the present becomes the site of the adjudication of norms, the place where the accountability lies. While as many voices as possible should be taken into account, and our indebtedness to the past should be acknowledged, the question of the impact/consequences of the norms we decide on move to the centre: "…historicism, when fully articulated, points in the direction of pragmatism and the pragmatic adjudication of claims to truth and adequacy" (2006:156, 157). The kind of question to be asked in deciding on norms for the present, one for which no once-and-for-all answer exists, and which has to be asked and answered again and again in new

situations becomes: "What difference will it make to our bodies, to our communities, to those affected by our lives, to the larger web of human life and nature (1997:212; cf. 2006:156, 157)?" All of this is, of course, vastly complex, and realised by her to be so.

Lastly, Davaney's theology can be typified as not only a present-, but as a future-oriented one. Although she only hints in the latter direction, the qualified role awarded by her to the past, despite all the effort to define its character and significance, as well as her emphasis on the critical, constructive and creative way the past and its traditions should be dealt with, with an envisioned "new" resulting from this, in the end unmistakably point to the future. If her view of the past and its role is consistently carried through, the past(s) will always, in one way or another, be an ingredient in this future (cf. 2006:148). Nowhere is this future orientation made more explicit than, having opted for the incorporation of resources from other traditions into constructive Christian theological proposals, she writes that "we must be open to any instrument that might guide us safely not to our homes of yesterday but to new homes that we yet have to build or even envision" (2000:176).

8 Conclusion

By way of a summary, some of the main threads running through Davaney's work addressed in this article are picked up again, emphasising her contribution to contemporary theology and asking a few questions.

The "opening up" of a religious tradition from a historicist perspective, in this case the Christian one, should be welcomed, even if, during its long history, the Christian tradition mostly functioned in a more restricted way, if not in the same way in all periods and places. Davaney's careful theorising of the relation between past and present, over against different kinds of simplistic views on this matter which function in some contemporary theological and biblical scholarly discourses, is another important aspect of her work. She has, moreover, succeeded in incorporating meaningfully numerous contemporary issues into her work, often in dialogue with other scholars and disciplines, and has in the process come up with a proposal for academic theology that can function in the "open". Though she draws extensively on Western intellectual insights, her work encompasses much more than this. Addressing disparities in power in social, political and economic relationships and giving a voice, in theological discourse, to those who have mostly been denied this, is crucial to her work. Relating religion to culture, the focus of theology is broadened to include an engagement with concrete beliefs and practices.

Keeping in mind that Davaney's view of a religious tradition is the product of her attempt to think consistently historically, and that she is concerned with a centuries-old "lived and living tradition", a number of questions about tradition and the way it, according to her, functions, nevertheless come to mind. It may be asked whether a religious tradition can exist and survive without a more circumscribed "canon" and a

specific way of dealing with this. Would inheritance and traditionedness be possible without this (cf. Smith in Murphy 2007:159; also Weddle in Davaney 2002:4)? Moreover, what would it, in practice, entail to go back to a whole tradition in all its concrete messiness, as she calls it? One may further ask whether what history weighted early on, although this is nowadays related to power, does not form part of the history that has to be taken seriously. Did a specific variation of Christianity, as a result of this, not early on become so fixed and powerful that it afterwards inevitably developed in a specific direction, so that diversity, according to some scholars, was quite early absorbed largely into the "One" (cf, e.g., Hampson 2002; Kennedy 2006:ix)? Or is, also in the contemporary conversation on the Christian religion in South Africa, too much emphasis placed on "closure", on the so-called "master narrative" of Christianity, either boosting or de-constructing this, while many other narratives within the comprehensive Christian tradition, told through the centuries, and many other strands of thought, practice and interpretation are more or less ignored (cf. Eagleton 2008; Maluleke 1997)?

Another question prompted by her work is how the theology she proposes would look like "in practice" (cf. Crosby 2002:2). Unlike, for example, with Gordon Kaufman, there is in her work no attempt to (re)construct (the symbol of) God or the significance of Jesus for contemporary contexts (Kaufman 1981:21–57; 2007). The envisaged constructive task of theology would become even more complex when other traditions, religious and otherwise, have to become part of the picture, something of which she is fully aware.

One could also ask whether there is not some incompatibility in the way the work of co-scholars and the religion of "ordinary people" is dealt with. While the work of the former is scrutinised with regard to how seriously historicity and its implications are taken, except for moving away from texts to concrete beliefs and practices, she does not really elaborate on the views of "ordinary people" and their likely incompatibility with those of scholars, including historicist sensibilities, except for her cautioning against the romanticising of popular beliefs and practices. Though it is about critical engagement with these, these beliefs and practices presuppose worldviews which may, in many cases, be informed by different sources than those on which scholars draw. How would the democratisation of theology (2006:166) work in practice? Are the different "strands" of her work, though in some ways related, not in other respects incompatible? Or do they somehow come together in her inclusive pragmatic historicism, which leaves room for differences, and in which the effects are in the end what really counts?

Linking up with a question of Donald Crosby in his review of *Pragmatic historicism,* one may lastly ask about the specifically religious value of her proposal for theology, in Crosby's words, in what ways this can "speak to our deepest religious aspirations, needs and values", that is the matter of religious commitment in the aftermath of historicism (Crosby 2002:2). In her response to him she reiterates her view that religious beliefs and practices are not different in kind from other beliefs and practices, that religion does not belong to a separate sphere, which "plays by different rules", but forms part of

culture, and that, in our contemporary world with the insights available to us, including its religious pluralism, religious commitment will have to do without claims to absolute truth, the universal applicability of one's values and the assumption that one's own practices are of a non-historical kind (Davaney 2002:2).

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Innocentissima aetas: Römische Kindheit im Spiegel literarischer, rechtlicher und archäologischer Quellen des 1. bis 4. Jhs. n. Chr.

Annika Backe-Dahmen
(Mainz: Ph. von Zabern, 2006). 245 pp. + 112 Schwarzweißabbildungen. Cloth.
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Reviewed by Christoph Stenschke

Der großformatige Band (22,5 x 31 cm) geht zurück auf eine Doktoraldissertation an der Universität Freiburg i. Br. (2003). Darin gibt die Verfasserin einen hervorragenden Überblick über literarische, juristische und archäologische Quellen zu Kindern und Kindheit in Rom bzw. im röm. Reich. Die zentrale Frage ist dabei, wie die röm. Gesellschaft im Zeitraum vom 1. bis zum 4. Jh. Kindheit bewertete. Die gegenwärtige Forschung gibt ein vielschichtiges, wenn nicht verwirrendes Bild: "Mal schildert die sie die röm. Antike als Hort moralischer Deprivation, in der das Leben eines Kindes einem Alptraum gleichkam, ein anderes Mal wird betont, dass die Gesellschaft Kinder wertschätzte, liebte und umhegte" (9). Bei der Erarbeitung dieses Themas ist jedoch zu bedenken, "dass die meisten Kinder in der röm. Antike in den Überlieferungen kein Echo fanden, weil sie den unteren gesellschaftlichen Schichten angehörten, kein Plinius oder Augustinus sie erwähnte und sie nach ihrem Tode kein aufwändiges Grabmal erhielten. So geben die Quellen gleich welcher Gattung immer nur einen Ausschnitt des Gesamtbildes. Dieses ist durchaus geprägt von Widersprüchen und Ambivalenzen" (10).

Die Autorin beginnt im *ersten Teil* mit einem breiten Spektrum literarischer Äußerungen zur röm. Kindheit vom späten 1. Jh. v. Chr. bis zum frühen 5. Jh. n. Chr. (11-47). Dazu gehören Aussagen bei Cicero, Seneca d. J., Quintilian, Plinius d. J., Fronto sowie bei Hieronymus (32-39) und Aurelius Augustinus (39-46). Ziel der Darstellung ist es, die Forschungsmeinung zu prüfen, die eine stringente Entwicklung vom Kind als Negativum zum Kind als Positivum annimmt (11). Dabei sind Gattung, Adressaten, Verbreitungsgrad, der gesellschaftliche Stand des Verfassers und eventuell seine philosophischen Überzeugungen mit zu bedenken. Neben allgemeinen bzw. theoretisierenden Ausführungen zur Kindheit werden auch jene Äußerungen berücksichtigt, die einen Einblick in die frühen Lebensjahre des Verfassers geben. In anderen antiken Werken, wie Kaiserviten oder Lebensbeschreibungen von Märtyrern und Heiligen wird die Kindheit zwar thematisiert, doch "handelt es sich um Rückprojektionen bestimmter Eigenschaften des Erwachsenen in dessen frühe Jahre, oft angezeigt durch wundersame Erscheinungen im Moment der Geburt. … So haben die Schilderungen von Kindheit in diesen literarischen Gattungen einen topischen

Charakter und beschreiben nicht die antike Realität von Kindheit, sondern betonen und rückprojizieren das Exzeptionelle bestimmter Persönlichkeiten“ (11).

Bei Hieronymus erscheint als Novum, dass alle entsprechenden Äußerungen vom christl. Glauben motiviert und geprägt sind: “Gleich in welchem Kontext Kinder erwähnt werden, ob allgemein oder als bestimmte Individuen …, werden sie doch immer in einen Textzusammenhang gestellt, der einen christlichen, gottgefälligen Lebenswandel entweder lobend beschreibt oder anmahnt“ (39). Freilich ist diese neue Sicht auch mit entsprechenden Forderungen an die Eltern verbunden, die selbst ein möglichst untadelig ein christliches *exemplum* vorleben müssen und bei einem bereits getauften Kind auf dessen Verhalten genau achtgeben müssen.

Teil zwei beleuchtet die “Rechtsquellen zum röm. Kind“ (49-73). Darin erscheinen Kinder zunächst als Objekte väterlicher Gewalt (Inhalte der *patria potestas* und Rechtsentwicklungen einzelner Bereiche dieser Gewalt). Weiter geht es um legale “Wege aus der Familie“, nämlich die *expositio* und *oblatio* (Kindesaussetzung und die dazugehörige Rechtsentwicklung). Von Interesse sind ferner die kaiserlichen Heirats- und Sozialgesetze, nämlich die Gesetzgebung des Augustus in der *lex Iulia et Papia* und im *ius liberorum*. Entwicklungen im Erbrecht brachte das SCa Tertullianum (130 n. Chr.) und Orfitianum (178 n. Chr.). Ferner geht es um die spätantiken Entwicklungen und die Aufhebung der Sanktionen der *lex Iulia et Papia* durch Konstantin. Jedoch war das röm. Kind nicht nur Gegenstand gesetzlicher Regelungen, sondern wurde mit der Einführung des *ius liberorum* durch Augustus im Zuge von dessen Heirats- und Sozialgesetzgebung auch zum Unterpfand der mütterlichen Freiheit: “Nach der (in offizielle Register einzutragenden) Geburt von drei Kindern wurde einer Freigeborenen, nach der Geburt von vieren einer Freigelassenen die Geschlechtsvormundschaft aufgehoben“(73). Auch wurden Männer mit dem *ius liberorum* bei der Bewerbung um ein öffentliches Amt gegenüber unverheirateten, kinderlosen Mitkandidaten bevorzugt (vgl. 1. Tim 3.4). Die Verfasserin schließt:

> So zeigen die Rechtstexte, die kindesrelevante Themen behandeln, als Kodifikation sozialer Erwartungen und als Stufen einer fortschreitenden Entwicklung, die zwar das Prinzip väterlicher Gewalt beibehält, die rechtliche Position des röm. Kindes jedoch sukzessive verbessert. Die scharfe Zäsur zwischen den Bestimmungen des röm. Privatrechts der heidnischen und der christlichen Zeit läßt sich vor diesem Hintergrund nicht verifizieren (73).

Der umfangreichste, *dritte Teil* des Bandes untersucht private Kinderbildnisse der röm. Kaiserzeit (75-126). Diese erscheinen auf den sog. “Freigelassenenreliefs“ (Gesten und Handlungsmotive, Lieblingstiere und Lieblingsspielgerät als Attribute der Kinder, Schmuck und *bullae*, die *toga praetexta* als Kleidung, kindliche Frisuren und Gesichter), auf Grabaltären (Käuferschicht, Stifter, Auswertung der Geschlechterverhältnisse und Altersstufen, numerische Verteilung der Altäre auf verschiedene Epochen, Topik und individuelle Zusätze bei Inschriften). Zu den Besonderheiten einzelner Denkmäler gehören Darstellungen von Jungen als junge *equites*, Anspruch und Wirklichkeit kindlicher Bildung, heroische Nacktheit, Überhöhung und Apotheose und Hinweise auf

Kulte und auf die *consecratio in formam deorum*. Ferner erscheinen Kinderbildnisse freiplastisch und auf paganen und christlichen Kindersarkophagen. Jeweils bietet Backe-Dahmen eine Einordnung in den zeitgenössischen Kontext. Dem folgt ein umfassender Katalog der Kinderbildnisse, die detailliert beschrieben werden (135–225).

Die archäologischen Quellen thematisieren Kinder vor allem als Opfer der *mors immatura*. Sie erinnern an die Jungverstorbenen, deren jähre Tod die Erwartungen der Eltern auf die eigene Versorgung im Alter und ein standesgemäßes Begräbnis zunichte machte (128). Die Autorin schließt: "Dass in den Inschriften immer wieder die gleichen Epitheta topisch verwendet werden, schmälert nicht den Gehalt an Authentizität der Gefühlsäußerung. Vielmehr ist gerade der Umstand, dass sich Topoi ausbilden konnten, Beleg dafür, dass die Gesellschaft Trauer beim Tod eines Kindes nicht nur akzeptierte, sondern sogar ‚erwartete'" (130).

Die Inschriften werden nur im latein. Original wiedergegeben. Zum Katalogteil gehören Bildtafeln mit 112 Schwarzweißabbildungen. Der Band enthält eine deutsche und englische Zusammenfassung (127–34) und ausführliche Bibliographie (227–30); vgl. auch die inhaltlich breitere populäre Darstellung der Verfasserin *Die Welt der Kinder in der Antike*; Mainz: Ph. von Zabern, 2008).

In den schriftlichen Quellen läßt sich die Theorie einer stringenten Entwicklung hin zu einer gesteigerten Wertschätzung des Kindes per se nicht aufrechterhalten. Die unterschiedlichen Belege zeichnen ein variationsreiches und differenziertes Bild, in dem einerseits die Kindheit als Phase mangelnden Verständnisses und rationaler Einsicht gesehen wird, anderseits reale Kinder durchaus geschätzt und um ihrer Eigenschaften willen geliebt werden (129). Die christliche Haltung ist bestimmt von der Forderung des *infantia mente* von den Gläubigen. Damit ist nicht eine Rückkehr zu kindlichem/kindischen Verhalten gemeint, sondern eine gewisse Unschuld in moralischer Hinsicht (130). Durchgängig finden sich die folgenden Ambivalenzen in der römischen Gesellschaft in der Wertung und Behandlung von Kindern: "Kinder werden geschätzt ob ihrer Verspieltheit – Kinder werden gepriesen, wenn sie sich bereits wie Erwachsene verhalten. Kinder werden umhegt – Kinder werden ausgesetzt. Kinder sind geliebte Abbilder ihrer Eltern – Kinder sind wie Sklaven oder Haustiere zu züchtigen. Der frühe Tod von Kindern wird betrauert – Kinder werden in verschiedenster Weise ausgebeutet" (130).

Die Autorin schließt.

> Aus heutiger Sicht mag man vieles (vorschnell?) als rückständig und als einen Schritt in einer Entwicklung hin zu mehr Humanität, Aufgeklärtheit, Menschen-/Kinderrechten etc. bewerten. Die röm. Kultur praktizierte die Aussetzung von Kindern, beutete Sklavenkinder (ökonomisch und, in den Quellen schwer zu fassen, auch sexuell) aus, sah körperliche Züchtigung als geeignetes Erziehungsmittel an und bewertete Kindheit als (zu überwindende) Phase mangelnder Einsicht und rationalen Verständnisses.
>
> Dem stehen freilich diverse literarische Belege gegenüber, in denen Kinder gerade wegen ihrer nicht-erwachsenen Verhaltensweisen, ihrer größeren Lebensfreude und Spontaneität geliebt

> werden. Die Rechtstexte kodifizieren z.B. im Erbrecht moralische Obligationen im Interesse des Kindes. Grabdenkmäler und Inschriften innerhalb der archäologischen Quellen legen ihrerseits beredtes Zeugnis ab von der elterlichen Trauer, wenn ihr Nachwuchs Opfer der mors immatura … geworden ist (10).

Der Band enthält mehrere interessante Hinweise auf den Hintergrund des Neuen Testaments und auf die Einschätzung von Kindern in der Alten Kirche. Man wird an den Trauerzug um die Witwe von Nain und die Auferweckung ihres Sohnes (Lk 7.11-16) oder an die Trauer im Hause des Jairus erinnert. Die Rede von Paulus als fürsorglicher Amme und ermahnendem Vater in 1 Thessalonicher 2 wird lebendig; vgl. dazu C. Gerber, *Paulus und seine 'Kinder': Studien zur Beziehungsmetaphorik der paulinischen Briefe*, BZNW 136 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2005). Ferner erahnt man, wie und aus welcher Perspektive man im röm. Kontext die Kindheitsgeschichten der kanonischen (Johannes und Jesus) und apokryphen Evangelien gelesen haben wird. Auch die Aufforderung Jesu, Kinder in seinem Namen aufzunehmen (Mk 9.36f) und sie zum Empfang des Segens zu ihm kommen zu lassen (Mk 10.13-16) sowie der Hinweis, dass es nicht recht sei, den Kindern ihr Brot zu nehmen und es vor die Hunde zu werfen (Mt 15.26f). Das auf den Kinderbildnissen dargestellte Spielzeug zeigt die "kindlichen Dinge" (*ta tou nēpiou*), die Paulus abtat, als er ein Mann wurde (1 Kor 13.11; Backe-Dahmen spricht vom Topos des "Kindischen, was pejorativ dem Erwachsenen bescheinigt wird, der sich unvernünftig verhält", 127). Die Einbindung von Kindern und die Beschreibung ihres Verhältnisses zu ihren Eltern bildet auch den Hintergrund für die ntl. Haustafeln, die die Kinder in die Strukturen des antiken *oikos* einzeichnen. Angesichts der beschriebenen Funktion von Kindern in paganen Kulten fällt das weitgehende Schweigen des NT zu diesem Thema auf (vgl. Lk 2.41-52). Mit der altkirchlichen Säuglingstaufpraxis wurden Kinder freilich von Anfang an vollwertig in die Kultgemeinschaft integriert und mit entsprechenden Forderungen belegt.

Auf dem Hintergrund des hier zusammengetragenen Materials ist auch die Metapher Kind Gottes zu verstehen bzw. andere Kindesmetaphern, vgl. dazu J. M. M. Francis, *Adults as Children*: *Images of Childhood in the Ancient World and the New Testament* (*Religions and Discourse*, 17; Bern: P. Lang, 2006) und T. J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*: *Exploring a Pauline Metaphor*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Nottingham: Apollos; Downers Grove: IVP, 2006); zu Kindern im NT vgl. P. Müller, *In der Mitte der Gemeinde: Kinder im Neuen Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1992), den neuen Sammelband *The Child in the Bible*, hrsg. von M. J. Bunge, T. E. Fretheim und B. R. Gaventa (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) und P. Balla, *The Child-Parent Relationship in the New Testament and its Environment*, WUNT 155 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003; vgl. meine Rez. in *FilNT* 17, 2004, 127-30).

Luxus im Alten Rom: Die öffentliche Pracht

Weeber, Karl-Wilhelm.
(Darmstadt: Primus, 2006).
184 S. Gebunden. ISBN 978-3-89678-296-0

Die Schwelgerei, das Süße Gift: Luxus im Alten Rom

(Darmstadt: Primus, 2007).
176 S. Gebunden. ISBN 978-3-89678-330-1. Both volumes 40 Euro.

Reviewed by Christoph Stenschke

Schon im Brief des Paulus an die stadtrömischen Gemeinden werden Luxus und Laster im Umfeld der Adressaten angesprochen: "Lasst uns ehrbar leben wie am Tage, nicht in Fressen und Saufen, nicht in Unzucht und Ausschweifung, nicht in Hader und Eifersucht …" (13.13). Ferner kann man fragen, ob die Schilderung der Heiden in Römer 1.18–32 auch spezifische lokale Züge trägt (zur Verankerung des Römerbriefs im konkreten stadtrömischen Kontext vgl. die Überlegungen bei K. Haacker, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans, New Testament Theology; Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 113–34.*

Die vorliegenden beiden, großformatigen (22 x 27 cm) und großzügig farbig illustrierten Bildbände bieten eine hervorragende historische, sozial- und kulturgeschichtliche Einführung in verschiedene Bereiche und Erscheinungsformen des Luxus im antiken Rom. Der Verfasser ist u. a. Professor für Alte Geschichte an der Universität Wuppertal und durch Veröffentlichungen zu verschiedenen Aspekten des römischen Alltags bekannt.

Im Band zur *öffentlichen Pracht*, der hier ausführlicher vorgestellt wird, schildert W. einführend die "*publica magnificentia*: Prachtentfaltung als Herrschaftskonzept" (1–17). Dazu gehören das Bestreben, "Beutekunst" in der Öffentlichkeit auszustellen, die Vorliebe des Volkes für öffentlichen Prunk, die Bedeutung und Funktion von Luxus als Leistungsnachweis, das Bestreben, die errungene Weltherrschaft nun auch öffentlich zu präsentieren, Bürgerstolz und Selbstbewusstsein, die Freigebigkeit als Herrschaftstugend und Herrschaftsinstrument sowie die damit verbundene Prachtentfaltung in den Provinzen als *imitatio Romae*:"Sie bemühten sich nach Kräften, hauptstädtische *magnificientia* zu kopieren und auch ihren Bürgern eine *maiestas* zu bieten, die keinesfalls provinziell war" (15; man denke dabei an die Herodier und ihre verschiedenen Bauprojekte in Palästina und anderswo). Daher gelten viele der hier beschriebenen Aspekte öffentlicher Pracht (mit den entsprechenden Einschränkungen) auch für die Städte des röm. Reiches. W. hebt dabei die Rolle lokaler Eliten hervor:

> Sie investierten hohe Summen für öffentliche Bauten, Spiele und andere Formen von Wohltätigkeit für die Gesellschaft. *Noblesse oblige* – solche ostentativen Schenkungen waren auch Beweis für ihren Reichtum und ihre gesellschaftliche Stellung und zugleich eine gewisse Rechtfertigung für den eigenen Wohlstand. "Man versucht sich Vermögen zu erwerben, um sich durch Beiträge zu den öffentlichen Ausgaben seiner Vaterstadt Ehre zu machen", stellt Lukian fest (15; vgl. im NT Lk 22.25; Apg 4.9; 10.38).

Weiter beschreibt W. die mit enormem Aufwand veranstalteten verschiedenen Spiele, wie Wagenrennen im Circus, das Theater, Aufstieg und Vorstellungen des Pantomimus, Gladiatorenkämpfe, Massenkämpfe und Seeschlachten, Jagden in der Arena, athletische Wettkämpfe sowie Geschenke für das Volk und öffentliche Gastmähler im Kontext von Spielen (17–56). W. beleuchtet ihre Funktion als Glanz zur Herrschaftssicherung, als politische Ablenkungsmanöver sowie als ritualisierte Schaulust und beschreibt die Prunkstätten der Massenunterhaltung, an denen die unterschiedlichen *spectacula* stattfanden (57–76, Theater, Arena, Circus und Stadien; vgl. dazu W. Letzner, *Der römische Circus: Massenunterhaltung im Römischen Reich*; Mainz: Ph. von Zabern, 2009). Diese beiden Kapitel umreißen eindrucksvoll den Hintergrund der altkirchlichen Polemik gegen solche Veranstaltungen, wie man sie etwa in Tertullians und Novatians Schriften *De spectaculis* findet.

Unter dem Stichwort *aquaeductus* geht es um die verschiedenen "Wunderwerke des Wasserbaus", die als Prachtbauwerke mit Nutzen zugleich Spiegel römischer Größe waren (77–100; vgl. die Aquädukte im römischen Palästina!). Ferner war das kaiserliche "Wassermanagement" eine gezielte Investition in Popularität. Die großen Wasserleitungen waren, als reichsweit eingesetzte und finanzierte imperiale Prestige-Architektur außerdem steinerne Zeugen der Naturbeherrschung. Weiter beschreibt W. die luxuriösen Badepaläste für das Volk (101–18), die prächtigen öffentlichen Toilettenanlagen Roms (119–28) sowie die Säulenhallen (*ambulationes*), die der Oberschicht als Treffpunkt und zum Flanieren dienten (129–38; vgl. die Säulenhallen des Jerusalemer Tempels, die Teil der herodianischen Prunkarchitektur waren).

Beliebtester und prächtigster Baustoff für all diese Großprojekte war Marmor, der zugleich als Mittel zur "Repräsentation in Stein" diente (139–56, u. a. verschiedene Sorten, Provenienzen und Preise, Bearbeitung und Transport; zu Vorkommen und deren geographischer Verortung vgl. ferner die Karte … in A.-M. Wittke, E. Olshausen, R. Szydlak, *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt*, Der Neue Pauly – Supplemente 3 (Stuttgart, Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2007; vgl. meine Rez. in *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 19, 2008, 411–15), . Nicht umsonst wird in Offenbarung 18.12 Marmor unter den Handelsgütern der "Kaufleute der Erde" mit der Stadt Babylon erwähnt.

Die in Rom zusammenlaufenden *viae publicae* waren die Lebensadern des Reiches (157–73; u.a. Wegbeschreibungen und Karten, Übernachtungs- und Verpflegungsmöglichkeiten auch als Hintergrund für die geforderte christliche Gastfreundschaft, die kaiserliche Dienstpost (*cursus publicus*), Verbreitung von Straßenräubern – vgl. 2. Kor 11.26; Lk 10.30–35, ohne den Samariter hätte das Opfer

in der Gleichniserzählung wohl die verbreitete Grabinschrift *interfectus a latronibus* erhalten! - vgl. dazu W. Heinz, *Reisewege der Antike: Unterwegs im Römischen Reich*; Stuttgart: Theiss, 2003; meine Rez. in *NT* 51, 2009, 95–98). Auf einer dieser Straßen kam Paulus nach Rom (Apg 28.13–15). Der Band endet mit Anmerkungen (174–79, hauptsächlich Nachweis der Quellen) und einem Literaturverzeichnis (180–82). An vielen Stellen werden in hervorgehobenen Blöcken antike Quellen zitiert.

Der zweite Band beleuchtet ähnlich attraktiv und instruktiv den römischen Luxus im privaten Bereich. W. beschreibt einführend Armut und Reichtum in der röm. Gesellschaft (9–14), die Tischkultur und den Tafelluxus (15–36), die Fischzucht (37–42), den Wettstreit um die prächtigste Villa (43-62); die Badesitten der Oberschicht (63–72), Erotik und Sexualität der noblen Welt (73–88), Purpur, Klienten und Kunst und andere Statussymbole als Gradmesser gesellschaftlicher Exklusivität (89–104), Perlen als "Frauenlieblinge" (105–10), die Beistelltische für Symposien als "Männerlieblinge (111–14), die Rolle von Parfüm und Schmuck (115-26; "Millionenmärkte der Eitelkeit"), Sklavenluxus und Luxussklaven (127–36) sowie Bestattungspracht und Gräberluxus (137-56). Abschließend untersucht W. die verbreitete antike Luxusschelte, die teilweise im luxuriösen Ambiente stattfand (157–65). Der Band endet mit einer Zusammenstellung der 25 reichsten Römer (166f), unter ihnen auch der Philosoph Lucius Annaeus Seneca (gest. 65 n. Chr.), der zugleich einer der schärfsten Kritiker des zeitgenössischen Luxus war.

Neben Schlaglichtern auf einzelne Aussagen des Römerbriefs, vielen weiteren interessanten Hinweisen für das NT, das neben ländlichen Gegenden in den Städten des röm. Ostens beheimatet ist, beleuchten W.s Bände auch das Umfeld, in dem die Entstehung und Entwicklung der stadtrömischen Christenheit der ersten Jahrhunderte stattfand. Dass das Verhältnis der Christen zum zeitgenössischen Luxus - ob tatsächlich vorhanden oder nur als Wunsch – zumindest in der Praxis keineswegs einheitlich war, sondern sich auf der ganzen Bandbreite zwischen asketischer Verwerfung und unbekümmertem Mitmachen bewegte, hat jüngst die Untersuchung von C. Mühlenkamp, *"Nicht wie die Heiden": Studien zur Grenze zwischen christlicher Gemeinde und paganer Gesellschaft in vorkonstantinischer Zeit*, JAC Ergänzungsband: Kleine Reihe 3 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2008) gezeigt.

Der römische Circus: Massenunterhaltung im Römischen Reich

Letzner, Wolfram.
(Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2009). 152 S. gebunden. ISBN 978-3-8053-3944-5. 29 €

Reviewed by Christoph Stenschke

Was für die Christen Brot und Wein waren, waren für die große Mehrheit der antiken städtischen Bevölkerung Brot und Spiele, *panem et circenses* (Juvenal, *Satiren* X,81). Ein wesentlicher Teil dieser Spiele fand in den Circusanlagen der antiken Welt statt. Im Gegensatz zu populären Vorstellungen will der Band "ein differenziertes Bild auf dem aktuellen Stand der Forschung geben. Dabei treten schriftliche Quellen und archäologische Befunde gleichberechtigt nebeneinander" (7). Schwerpunkte der Darstellung sind die Entstehung des röm. Circus als Bauform und die Entwicklung der Veranstaltungen im Circus und ihre organisatorischen Abläufe.

Dr. Letzner, klassischer Archäologe und freiberuflicher Autor, beginnt mit den schriftlichen Quellen und Bildquellen zum röm. Circus (8–10) und einer Abgrenzung der unterschiedlichen Gebäude der Massenunterhaltung, nämlich Circus, Stadion, Amphitheater und Theater. Nach knappen Überlegungen zu architektonischen Vorbilder des röm. Circus (15–17; griech. Hippodrome und etruskische Wagenrennbahnen) geht es detailliert um die Bestandteile und Einzelformen des Circus sowie ihre Entstehung (18–55): Grundriss, Ausrichtung, Dimensionen der Circusanlagen, Zuschauerkapazitäten, das äußere Erscheinungsbild des Circus, Bögen, die Startseite des Circus, die Arena, das Liniensystem, die Wendepunkte (*metae*), die Mittelbarriere, der Wassergraben, Dekoration der Mittelbarriere, Funktionselemente auf der Barriere, wie z.B. der Rundenzähler, die *porta libertinaria* als Notausgang, das *pulvinar* als eine Art Götterloge (als Sitz/Tempel der Götter, die in der *pompa circensis* vor dem Rennen in den Circus gebracht wurden), die Schiedsrichterlogen, der Zuschauerraum sowie Maßnahmen zur Sicherheit im Circus.

Ferner beschreibt L. die *Ludi* als Basis der Circusspiele (56-58) und die spätere zahlenmäßige Explosion der Spiele unter dem Motto "je mehr, desto besser". Dann widmet er sich dem Rennalltag bzw. dem Ablauf einzelner Rennen (61–73, orientiert an den stadtröm. Verhältnissen). Rennen beginnen mit der *pompa circensis*, einem öffentlichen Umzug der Spielegeber, Jugendlicher zu Fuß und zu Pferde, der Fahrer mit ihren Wagen und ihrem Begleitpersonal vom Capitol hin zum Circus Maximus in deutlicher Parallele zum röm. Triumphzug: "Auf Wagen … folgten die Götterbilder, die nach der *pompa* für die Dauer der Veranstaltung ihren Platz im *pulvinar* finden sollten. … In den unmittelbaren Kontext der Götter gehörten deren Attribute, die auf Tragegestellen … hinter ihnen hergetragen wurden. … Der sakrale Teil der *pompa*

circensis fand in einem großen Tieropfer seinen Abschluss. Auch hier folge man dem Vorbild des Triumphzugs“ (65f). Neben der Beschreibung des Ablaufs des eigentlichen Rennens geht es auch um Unfälle in der Arena und die damalige Notfallmedizin (renntypische Verletzungen konnten relativ gut behandelt werden). Zum Arbeitsgerät der “Rennfahrer“ gehören die Fahrzeuge, Gespanne, Pferde (“Für das 1. und 2. Jh. n. Chr. waren besonders Tiere aus Afrika beliebt; die Zahl der mit afrikanischen Pferden eingefahrenen Siege war enorm“, 79, 62 % der auf Inschriften genannten Tieren kamen aus Afrika) und die Berufskleidung der Fahrer (74-80).

Weiterhin schildert L. Fahrer und ihre Rennkarrieren (Herkunft, Ausbildung, Laufbahn, Perspektiven nach der aktiven Zeit) sowie die Circusparteien (87–92; Entsehung der *factiones*, Konkurrenten oder Partner: Kooperation verschiedener Gesellschaften, die *factiones* im Wandel der Zeit, Ausbreitung der *factiones*, die *factio* als Wirtschaftsbetrieb – Personal und Firmensitz). Ferner geht es um die Besucher sowie um Wetten und den Einsatz von Magie, um den Ausgang von Rennen zu beeinflussen (nicht alle antiken Christen waren trotz ihrer hohen moralischen Ansprüchen gegen den Glauben an Magie immun, so dass die Begeisterung im Circus siegte, 97f). Andere Veranstaltungen im Circus waren Vorführungen der Kunstreiter, Troja-Spiele, Rennen mit anderen Zugtieren, Tierschauen und Jagden (*venationes*) und athletische Wettkämpfe (100–05). Ferner schildert L. die komplexe Beziehung zwischen Kaiser und Rennsport zwischen wahrer Leidenschaft und politischem Kalkül sowie die Geschäfte rings um den Circus (110f). Unter den Gewerben waren Wahrsager und Astrologen verbreitet, ferner zahlreiche Prostituierte: “Besonders dieses Umfeld war christl. Autoren ein Dorn im Auge, wenn sie sich negativ zum Circusbesuch äußerten. Der gebürtige Karthager Caecilius Cyprianus (um 200-258 n. Chr.) … stellte fest, der Zugang zum Circus erfolge direkt durch ein Bordell (*Spect*. 5)“ (111). Dieser Werkstitel läßt sich für Cyprian nicht nachweisen in M. Landfester (ed.), *Geschichte der antiken Texte: Autoren- und Werklexikon*, Der Neue Pauly - Supplemente 2 (Stuttgart, Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2007), 192-95 (vgl. meine Rez. in *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 19, 2008, 396–99) und A. Hoffmann, “Cyprian von Karthago“, in S. Döpp, W. Geerlings (eds.), *Lexikon der antiken christl. Literatur*, 3. ed. (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2002), 169–74 (auch nicht unter den pseudo-cyprianischen Schriften; auf Rückfrage verwies L. als Quelle auf K.-W. Weeber, *Panem et circenses*; Mainz: Ph. von Zabern, 1994, 60, Anm. 72).

Nach Überlegungen zu Baufinanzierung und Bauunterhalt (112–16, öffentliche und private Finanzierung) geht es um die immensen Kosten von Circusspielen (Finanzierung der Spiele bis zum Ende der Republik sowie in der Kaiserzeit, sowie die spätere “kommunale Charity“). Spannend ist auch der Abschnitt zur Verbreitung von Circusanlagen in unterschiedlichen Teilen des Reiches (122–28).

Abschließend folgen Fragen der urbanen Struktur zwischen Circus und Stadt (topographische und kulturelle Faktoren, Umweltfaktor, Kostenfaktor) sowie die bauliche Verhältnisbestimmung von Palast und Circus. Der Anhang bietet ein Glossar (141), Literaturverzeichnis (142–48, Sachthemen in alphabetischer Abfolge und zu

den unterschiedlichen Circusanlagen, die im Band angesprochen werden) und über einhundert Anmerkungen). Der Band ist mit 57 Farb- und 12 Schwarzweißabbildungen großzügig illustriert. Zu den *spectacula* und den "Prunkstätten der Massenunterhaltung" vgl. auch K.-W. Weeber, *Luxus im Alten Rom: Die öffentliche Pracht* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2006), 57–76.

Durchweg zeigt L.s Darstellung, in welchem Ausmaß der antike Circus mit antiker Religion verwoben ist. Während der Circus und seine Veranstaltungen im NT nicht direkt erwähnt werden, spielen sie doch in der urbanen Umwelt des NT eine Rolle. Selbst im unmittelbaren Umfeld Jesu und der Urgemeinde gab es Circusanlagen, z. B. in Gadara, Gerasa, sowie in Nablus. Dazu kommen Anlagen in Damaskus, Jerusalem und Magdala/Tarichaea sowie die Anlagen, die unter Herodes dem Großen in Caesarea Maritima am Palast, in Jericho und beim unteren Palast vom Herodium entstanden. Dazu sind in Gaza und Neapolis Rennen belegt (125). Während Sepphoris und sein Theater gelegentlich in der Jesusforschung Erwähnung findet (vgl. den Index in C. A. Evans (ed.), Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus; London, New York: Routledge, 2008), spielen die erwähnten Anlagen keine Rolle.

Zudem bietet L.s gründlich recherchierter und allgemeinverständlicher Band einen hervorragenden Hintergrund für die altkirchl. Einschätzung des Circus und seiner Veranstaltungen (vgl. dazu W. Weismann, Kirche und Schauspiele: Die Schauspiele im Urteil der lateinischen Kirchenväter unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustin; Würzburg: Augustinus, 1972). Dazu gehört als bekanntestes Beispiel die ausführliche Polemik des Tertullian (160/70 bis 212 n. Chr.) in seiner Schrift De Spectaculis (verfasst 196/97 oder 202 n. Chr.; Datierung umstritten), die L. mehrfach als Quelle heranzieht und würdigt (8, 69, 81). C. Mühlenkamp stellt die Haltung Tertullians unter der Überschrift "Die spectacula als pompa diaboli" treffend dar ("Nicht wie die Heiden": Studien zur Grenze zwischen christlicher Gemeinde und paganer Gesellschaft in vorkonstantinischer Zeit, JAC Ergänzungsband: Kleine Reihe 3 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2008), 87-97 (ferner S. 51–54). L.s Studie zeigt durchgehend, worauf die scharfe Abgrenzung bei Tertullian und anderen Autoren (Cyprian, Novatian ebenfalls im 3. Jh., zusammengefasst bei Mühlenkamp, 94f) beruht. Doch zeigt allein schon die Tatsache, dass das Thema mit eigenen Schriften bedacht wurde, dass zumindest in der altkirchlichen Praxis anscheinend kein Konsens bestand, was den Circus, seine Veranstaltungen und die Teilnahme von Christen betrifft.

Fernhandel in Antike und Mittelalter: Herausgegeben in Zusammenarbeit mit "Damals – das Magazin für Geschichte und Kultur"

Bohn, Robert et al.
(Stuttgart: K. Theiss, 2008; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008).
128 Seiten. Gebunden. ISBN 978-3-8062-2148-0. 25 €

Reviewed by Christoph Stenschke

Eines der Kennzeichen des frühen Christentums und der Alten Kirche ist ihre Mobilität, die zur Ausbreitung des Christentums entscheidend beigetragen hat. Von Anfang an spielen Reisen im Neuen Testament eine Rolle: Jesus von Nazareth verbringt einen Teil seines öffentlichen Wirkens auf der Reise. Die Apostelgeschichte berichtet von jüdischen Wallfahrten nach Jerusalem, von Reisen als Flucht, von Missionsreisen und einem ereignisreichen Gefangenentransport quer durch den östlichen Mittelmeerraum. Wie selbstverständlich sind Paulus, seine Mitarbeiter und andere Christen entlang der antiken Handelsrouten unterwegs. Sie wissen, den regen Verkehr von Handelsschiffen für ihre Zwecke zu nutzen. Schon der Prophet Jona reiste vergeblich mit einem phönizischen Handelsschiff auf dem Weg nach Westen (Jon 1). Der Jakobusbrief warnt Christen, die Fernhandel treiben, nicht vor ihrem Ansinnen, sondern vor falscher Sicherheit ("Heute oder morgen wollen wir in die oder die Stadt gehen und wollen ein Jahr dort zubringen und Handel treiben und Gewinn machen"; 4:13).

Der vorliegende, reichlich und hervorragend illustrierte Sammelband bietet einen ersten Einblick in den Fernhandel in Antike und Mittelalter. Im Vorwort bemerkt M. P. Hiller u.a., dass antiker Fernhandel in der Regel Handel in Etappen war: "An den wichtigen Verkehrsknotenpunkten, die oft über Jahrhunderte florierten, trafen sich Kaufleute aus Ost und West, Nord und Süd und tauschten ihre Waren" (7). Doch ging es dabei nicht nur um Waren:

> Fernhandel durchbrach die Grenzen der bekannten Welt immer aufs Neue. Und er transportierte mitnichten nur Waren. mindestens so wichtig waren das Wissen und die Ideen, die entlang dieser Routen vermittelt wurden, denn Kulturen waren nie völlig abgeschottet. Den Karawanen schlossen sich auch Missionare an, auf Schiffen reisten auch Pilger, und neugierig beobachtende Kaufleute brachten die Kunde von all dem Wundersamen mit, das sie auf ihren Reisen gesehen hatten (7).

K. Radner untersucht "Lapislazuli, Glas und Gold: Fernhandel im Alten Orient" (9–24). Radner beginnt mit der Analyse des Geschäftsarchivs eines Mannes namens Duri-Assur aus der zweiten Hälfte des 7. Jh. v. Chr., beschreibt die Zufälle der Überlieferung

sowie den Handel per Schiff nach Dilmus, Magan und bis zum Indus. Ferner geht es um den Weg ins Innere Anatoliens und den Handel mit Afrika (vor allem Ägypten, bezeugte Waren: Gold, Edelhölzer, Gewürze, exotische Tiere und ihre Produkte wie Elfenbein, Felle und Federn) und der Levante. Die Handelswaren lassen sich neben schriftlichen Quellen auch aus den Ladungen gesunkener antiker Fernhandelsschiffe erschließen (Listen auf S. 18f). Auch die Beziehung von Assyrien und den phönizischen Handelsstädten wird behandelt, u. a. Tyros und Sidon (hier fehlt der Hinweis auf die prophetischen Gerichtsworte über die herrlichsten Händler der Erde in Jes 23.2f,8 und Hes 27.3–33; das AT hätte auch sonst einiges zu bieten; vgl. den Überblick bei R. Schäfer, "Handel", CBL I, 503). Radner schließt:

> Der altorientalische Fernhandel weist eine erstaunliche Komplexität auf. Vor allem in der Bronze- und Eisenzeit existieren weitgespannte Verbindungen – von Indien oder Iran bis in den Mittelmeerraum und von Anatolien bis nach Afrika oder auf die Arabische Halbinsel. Mit Flößen und Eseln, Segelschiffen und Kamelkarawanen wurden die Massen- oder Luxusgüter transportiert, und oft begleitete ein reger Briefverkehr die Transaktionen (9).

In "Wie Frösche um einen Teich: Güteraustausch in der klassischen Mittelmeerwelt" (25–42) zeigt M. Sommer, dass Griechen und Phönizier seit frühester Zeit als Seefahrer und Händler das Mittelmeer befuhren. Über Jahrhunderte hinweg entstand so ein integrierter Wirtschaftsraum, der vom Schwarzen Meer bis zum Atlantik reichte. Mit dem *mare nostrum* der Römer entstand später ein einheitlicher politischer Raum, den ein dichtes Netz von Straßen und Nachrichtenverbindungen durchzog und in dem überall dieselben Gesetze galten. Neben dem Binnenhandel beleuchtet Sommer auch den intensiven Fernhandel jenseits der römischen Grenzen (39–42, u. a. Bedeutung der Stadt Palmyra auf halbem Weg zwischen Euphrat und Mittelmeer, Handel auf den Flüssen des Rhein-Donau–Raums, der Limes bildete einen Grenzsaum, der für kontrollierte Bewegungen von Menschen, Gütern und Informationen durchlässig war). Der Handel mit Indien und China galt Luxuswaren wie Seide und Gewürzen, aus Südarabien kam Weihrauch). Sommer beobachtet:

> Die Mobilität von Gütern, Menschen und Waren brachte den Menschen, die daran Anteil hatten, große Vorteile. Während vom großräumigen Austausch weitgehend unberührte Gebiete wie Schwarzafrika südlich der Sahara, Australien und Amerika Wandel nur in sehr langsamen Rhythmen erlebten, machte der antike Mittelmeerraum zwischen 1200 v. Chr. und 500 n. Chr. eine stürmische Entwicklung durch, die seit der Zeitenwende auch periphere Räume wie den europäischen Nordwesten erfasste (42).

Die weiteren Beiträge sind: F. Reichert, "Auf der Reise in eine andere Welt: Die ‚Seidenstraße' als Handelsweg und mythischer Ort" (43–60); S. Conermann, "Unter dem Einfluss des Monsuns: Der Handel zwischen Arabien und Südasien" (61–80); R. Kauz, "Die Seemacht im Osten: Chinesische Handelsseefahrt bis in das 14. Jahrhundert" (81–94); M.-C. Schöpfer Pfaffen, "Kaufleute, Säumer und Ballenführer: Der transalpine Fernhandel im Mittelalter" (95-110; hier gäbe es auch interessante

Hinweise aus der Antike) und R. Bohn, "Handelsmacht im Norden Europas: Die Hanse – eine Interessengemeinschaft von Fernhändlern" (111–27). Der großformatige Band (22 x 28.5 cm) schließt mit weiterführenden Literaturhinweisen (128).

Zum Thema vgl. auch W. Heinz, Reisewege der Antike: Unterwegs im Römischen Reich (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2003; vgl. meine Rez. in NT 51, 2009, 95–98); E. J. Schnabel, Urchristliche Mission (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 2002), 617–25 (Reisen, internationale Mobilität und Nachrichtenwesen) und H. Kloft, Die Wirtschaft des Imperium Romanum (Mainz: Ph. von Zabern, 2006); speziell zum Nahrungsmitteltransport U. Fellmeth, Brot und Politik: Ernährung, Tafelluxus und Hunger im antiken Rom (Stuttgart, Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2001), 49–68.

Hervorragendes Kartenmaterial mit detaillierten Erläuterungen zu antiken Reiserouten und Entdeckungsfahrten ("Fernerkundung in der antiken Welt", 8f) sowie fünfzehn Karten zu antiken Verkehrswegen und Handel bieten A.-M. Wittke, E. Olshausen, R. Szydlak, Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt, Der Neue Pauly – Supplement 3 (Stuttgart, Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2007; vgl. meine Rez. in Acta Patristica et Byzantina 19, 2008, 411–15); vgl. das systematische Kartenverzeichnis auf S. XII; Beispiele sind: "Wirtschaft und Handel im Mittelmeerraum in der Zeit vom 7./6. Jh. bis zum frühen 4. Jh. v. Chr.", 85; "Handelswege in der röm. Kaiserzeit (1.–3. Jh. n. Chr.)", 203; "Vom Mittelmeer nach Indien: Land- und Seerouten im 1./2. Jh. n. Chr.", 205; "Die Wirtschaft im Mittelbyzantinischen Reich", 247.

Zu Fernhandel und Reisen im Mittelalter vgl. auch N. Ohler, "Reisen, Reisebeschreibungen I. Allgemein, Formen, Verkehrsmittel", LMA 7 (2002), 672-75 (vgl. auch N. Ohler, Reisen im Mittelalter, 2. ed. (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 2004); G. Orlandi, A. Vitale Brovarone, R. Simek, H. von Dijk, P. Schreiner, H. Göckenjan, H.-G. v. Mutius, "Reisebeschreibungen" (Überblick), LMA 7 (2002), 675–83 und H. Kellenbenz, "Kaufmann, Kaufleute", LMA 5 (2002), 1083–86.

Jerusalem: Ein Handbuch und Studienreiseführer zur Heiligen Stadt

Küchler, Max *et al.*
Orte und Landschaften der Bibel IV.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).
ix + 1266 pp., cloth. ISBN 3-525-50170-6, 99 €

Reviewed by Christoph Stenschke

Nach Küchlers früheren hervorragenden landeskundlichen Arbeiten (O. Keel, M. Küchler, C. Uehlinger, Ein Handbuch und Studienreiseführer zum Heiligen Land: Geographisch-geschichtliche Landeskunde, Orte und Landschaften der Bibel I (Zürich: Benziger; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984); Ein Handbuch und Studienreiseführer zum Heiligen Land: Der Süden, Orte und Landschaften der Bibel II (Zürich: Benziger; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982) ist nun als magnum opus ein umfangreiches und enorm gelehrtes Handbuch zu Jerusalem entstanden, das die facettenreiche Geschichte der Stadt umfassend aufarbeitet. Die Beitrage stammen neben Küchler von K. Bieberstein, D. Lazarek, S. Ostermann, R. Reich und C. Uehlinger. Zu seinem Vorgehen schreibt Küchler:

> Dieses Buch ist aus Begeisterung für diese einzigartige Stadt entstanden und will Begeisterung für sie wecken. Es ist aber eine aufgeklärte Begeisterung, die aus dem Studium der schriftlichen und archäologischen Primärquellen kommt, die ich – ob profan oder heilig – mit einem vorsichtigen Einsatz des historisch-kritischen Instrumentariums ausgewertet habe. Dabei ging es nie darum, eine Tradition oder einen Ort (wie unbedeutend er auch sei) lächerlich zu machen, sondern stets um den auf Quellen beruhenden, transparenten Aufweis, wann und wo eine Tradition entstanden ist und welches ihr geschichtlich bedingter Sinn ist (ix).

Nach Vorwort, Hinweisen zur Benutzung und einem Überblick über die historischen Epochen Jerusalems von der vorurbanen Zeit ca. 2000 v. Chr. bis nach 1967 geht es in fünfzehn Kapiteln um einzelne Teile bzw. Komplexe der Stadt: "Der Südosthügel – Wo Jerusalem begann und zur ‚Davidsstadt' wurde" (1–91), "Mauern und Tore der Stadt – Abwehr und Einlass" (92–124); "Der Nordosthügel – Der heilige Berg Jerusalems und seine Heiligtümer" (125-277); "Der archäologische Park – Im Schatten der Heiligtümer" (278-310); "Der Ost-West – Weg: Vom Löwentor zum Jaffator – Der christl. Querweg" (311–517); "Die Nord-Süd-Wege – Auf den Prachtstraßen der Antike" (518–37); "Das armenische Viertel – ein christl. Städtchen innerhalb der Stadt" (538–51); "Das jüd. Viertel – Der vierte Versuch" (552–601; Spuren der israelitischen und hasmonäischen Oberstadt – Macht und Untergang, Spuren der herodianischen Oberstadt – Glanz und Zerstörung, die Synagogen der mamelukischen und osmanischen Epoche als versteckte Gebetsorte

in feindlicher Zeit, jüd. und byzantinischer Wohnbereich außerhalb der Stadt); "Der Südwesthügel - der christl. Sion" (602–669; auf der Anhöhe befinden Vermächtnisse für Christen, Juden und Moslems, auf den Abhängen Hinweise auf Essener, Hohepriester und gescheiterte Propheten); "Das Kedrontal – Die Schlucht Jerusalems" (670–752, u.a. die hell.-röm. Felsengräber als Ausdruck priesterl. Grabpracht); "Das Hinnom-Tal – Tod, Grab, Gericht und Hölle" (753–89); "Der Ölberg – die jüd.-christl. ‚Höhe' von Jerusalem" (790–942); "Im Norden der Altstadt – Höhlen und Gräber, Mauern und Straßen, Kirchen und Klöster im Vorfeld der Stadt" (943-1012); "Im Westen der Altstadt – Teiche, Gräber, Klöster und Mauern" (1013–56) und "Die großen Museen – die biblisch-archäol. Schatzhäuser Jerusalems" (1057–95; das Israel Museum, das *Bible Lands Museum* und das Rockefellermuseum). Dabei folgt die Darstellung der einzelnen Orte jeweils dem Schema Lage, Name, Geschichte, Besichtigung, tw. auch Geschichte ihrer Erforschung.

Im abschließenden Teil "Ereignisse, Regenten, Bauten, Besucher" bietet Küchler einen instruktiven Überblick über die Geschichte Jerusalems bis in die Gegenwart (2005; 1096–1139; mit Plänen Jerusalems in den unterschiedlichen Epochen).

Die Anhänge bestehen aus einem Verzeichnis von Texten ("fünf bezeichnende Texte von jüd., christl. und islam. Autoren in freier deutscher Übers.", 1140–56) und vier Plänen aus der Kreuzfahrerzeit (1157–60) sowie einem Verzeichnis späterer Quellentexte und Bilder zu Jerusalem in chronologischer Reihenfolge (1161–70; von Kyrill von Jerusalem bis ins 16. Jh.), Literaturverzeichnis, einem Glossar der Fachbegriffe, Register der Orte und Traditionen und einem ausführlichen Inhaltsverzeichnis, das zusammen mit den Registern zur Benutzung des Bandes als Nachschlagewerk einlädt.

Neben Jerusalem in biblischer Zeit wird auch die bewegte nachbiblische Geschichte Jerusalems bis in die Gegenwart hinein berücksichtigt. Ausgangspunkt ist dabei die gegenwärtige Gestalt der Stadt. Der Band ist reichhaltig mit vielen schwarzweißen Skizzen, Grundrissen, Abbildungen von Inschriften, Lageplänen etc. illustriert. Die Karten auf den Einbandinnenseiten (vorne: "Mauern, Tore und Wege der Altstadt", hinten das Madaba-Mosaik) sind nur bedingt hilfreich. Hervorragende farbige Stadtpläne für verschiedene Epochen bietet z. B. NP 5 (1998), 903–06 und K. Bieberstein, "Jerusalem: Baugeschichte I: Von der frühen Bronzezeit bis zur Zerstörung durch Nebukadnezar II (3100-587/686 v. Chr); "II: Vom Wiederaufbau in persischer Zeit bis zur Zerstörung durch Titus (539 v. Chr. – 70 n. Chr)" und "III: Vom Wiederaufbau in hadrianischer Zeit bis zum Vorabend der Kreuzzüge (117-1099 n. Chr.)" = (TAVO B IV 7) in S. Mittmann, G. Schmidt (eds.), Tübinger Bibelaltlas: Auf der Grundlage des Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients (TAVO) / Tübingen Bible Atlas: Based on the Tübingen Atlas of the Near and Middle East (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2001; vgl. meine Rez. in *Religion and Theology* 10, 2003, 237–41).

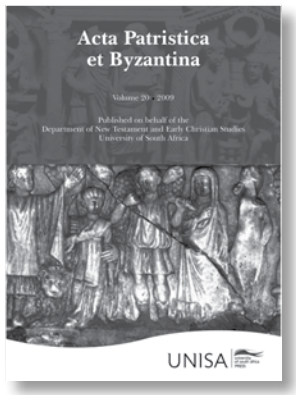
Küchler schreibt:

> Es ist die Überzeugung und der versteckte Imperativ dieses Buches: Erst wenn die Kinder dieser Stadt, die Juden, die Christen und die Muslime, den Reichtum ihrer Traditionen teilen und sich

> mit ihrem gemeinsamen kananäisch-israelitischen Erbe versöhnen, kann Jerusalem eine reife Metropolis, eine "Mutterstadt" sein, deren Faszination auch Charme hat, deren Verehrer auch Liebhaber sind und deren Vergangenheit nicht ohne Zukunft ist (vii).

Die meisten Jerusalemreisenden dürften einen kürzeren, farbig bebilderten, handlicheren und billigeren Reiseführer vorziehen. Wer sich allerdings im Detail mit der Stadt, ihrer bewegten Geschichte, ihren Gebäuden, archäologischen Funden und der Geschichte ihrer Erforschung beschäftigen will und dabei weder Zeit noch Kosten scheut, wird von Küchler und seinen Mitautoren reich belohnt.

Einen guten Überblick über die Geschichte Jerusalems bieten auch die Einträge von P. Welten, "Jerusalem I. AT", TRE 16, 1987, 590-609; J. K. Elliott, , "Jerusalem II. NT", TRE 16, 1987, 609–12; M. Barth, , "Jerusalem III. Judentum", TRE 16, 1987, 612–17; J. Wilkinson, "Jerusalem IV. Alte Kirche", TRE 16, 1987, 617–24 and F. Heyer, "Jerusalem V. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart", TRE 16, 1987, 624–35.



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